

PREACHING IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY SCOTLAND:  
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE EXTANT SERMONS OF  
RALPH ERSKINE (1685-1752), JOHN ERSKINE (1721-1803),  
AND HUGH BLAIR (1718-1800)

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## PREFACE

This study was undertaken from a desire to do research in the Scottish origins of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, a small denomination in the southern part of the United States. My parents were formerly members of this church, and it was at Erskine College, its educational institution, that I took my Arts degree.

My interest centered primarily in the preaching of the early Seceders, who were the founders of the Associate tradition of the A.R.P. Church. Principal Watt suggested that a comparative study be made between an outstanding preacher of the Secession and outstanding preachers of the other two parties--Evangelical and Moderate--in the Scottish church of that century.

Ralph Erskine, John Erskine, and Hugh Blair were selected. These men were chosen because of the availability of a fair number of their sermons and because they were representative men of their day and outlook. This choice, however, was not altogether satisfactory due to the fact that these three men were not at the height of their ministry simultaneously. Ralph Erskine's preaching was done in the first half of the eighteenth century, while that of the other two was mainly in the latter half. This should be borne in mind throughout the dissertation.

This is a study of sermons. The major portion of material has been derived from the following collections of sermons: The Sermons and Other Practical Works of the Reverend and Learned Ralph Erskine, A.M., 10 Volumes; Discourses Preached on Several Occasions, by John Erskine, 2 Volumes; and Sermons, by Hugh Blair, 5 Volumes. All quotations and references, unless otherwise indicated, are from these works. There is one exception, on page 115, in which a reference is made to Ralph Erskine's sermons, "On Prayer," which are to be found in The Sermons and Other Practical Works of the Late Reverend Ralph Erskine, A.M., 6 Volumes. While collateral reading has been done in other works apart from sermons, no material from these has been included in Chapters V-VII nor was intended to be.

The first four chapters present a general background of the period and of the life of each man. Facts and materials were drawn chiefly from secondary sources, which are indicated in the footnotes, and these sources have generally been found to be reliable. The method of comparison employed varies in Chapters V-VII, and this is due to the diverse nature of the material being presented. The reader will notice that Ralph Erskine receives what may be considered an undue proportion of emphasis. There are two reasons for this: first, because there was a larger amount of material available for him; and secondly, because he was the representative of the Secession.

The spelling that has been followed, outside of all quotations, is the best American usage. Quotations have been recorded exactly, with one exception--Arabic instead of Roman numerals have been used in Biblical references. The sermon titles in the footnotes are usually shortened due to the great length of some of the titles.

I wish to express my appreciation to my father and mother, for making possible this period of study; to the Rev. Principal Hugh Watt, D.D., and the Rev. Professor W.S. Tindal, O.B.E., M.A., for their helpful advice and criticism; to the Rev. Professor J.H.S. Burleigh, D.D., and the Rev. Principal C.S. Duthie, B.D., for their assistance on two chapters; to the Rev. J.B. Primrose, M.A., and Miss E.R. Leslie, M.A., for their willing co-operation at all times in the Library; and to the Rev. J.C. Ruffin, B.D., and the Rev. J.P. McCrary, B.D., for reading the manuscript and suggesting certain corrections.

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## A. Background

## CHAPTER I

### Scotland in the Eighteenth Century

"I passed to English ground, and hope I may never go to such a country again. I thank God I never saw such another, and must conclude with the poet Cleveland--

Had Cain been Scot, God had ne'er changed his doom,  
Not made him wander, but confined him home."<sup>1</sup>

So could an Englishman describe his impressions of Scotland at the beginning of the eighteenth century. And such feelings were shared by many of his fellow-countrymen who came into the north of Britain during the first sixty years of the century.

At that time Scotland was a land of general poverty, bad food, tedious, laborious, and dangerous traveling, crowded cities, ignorance, filth, and little culture.<sup>2</sup> And it would be difficult to understand the events that occurred and the types of sermons that were preached without some knowledge of the conditions in which people lived.

Country life was neither comfortable nor clean. The land was treeless and bleak, cultivated only in small patches. Food was ill-prepared, and there was little variety from broth or kail, beef or mutton, washed down with ale or occasionally wine.<sup>3</sup>

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1. "Journey through North of England and Scotland in 1704," as quoted by Graham, Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century, p. 2.

2. Burton, The History of Scotland, Vol. VIII, p. 507.

3. Graham, op. cit., pp. 9, 10.



The drinking of tea became fairly common about 1720, after making its way over vigorous opposition. Manners were rough, and clothes were simple. Money was scarce, and roads scarcely visible. To perform the journey of sixteen miles between Edinburgh and Haddington at the middle of the century occupied a whole winter's day for a coach with four horses.<sup>1</sup> Communication by mail was slow and uncertain, with gradual improvement after the first decade. Schools were few, and in many parishes it was difficult to obtain an education.

The mode of agriculture was very primitive. There was no such thing as rotation of crops, and the land was worn out by the perpetual sowing of oats. There was the system of 'run-rig,' where the fields were divided into strips, each tilled by a different person and redistributed every year. "With a system so atrocious, with land uncleaned, unlimed, unmanured, undrained, it frequently happened that the yield could not feed the inhabitants of the district, and men renting from forty to a hundred acres needed to buy meal for their families."<sup>2</sup> Famines occurred every few years and caused untold misery, starvation, and deaths, and much emigration.

The houses of the common people were mainly dirty, thatched-roof huts, with little to add comfort to the people's lives. Those of the gentry were two-story stone buildings, more commodious, but hardly more luxurious. Few books were read, and these

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1. Ibid., p. 41.

2. Ibid., p. 159.

centered mostly around religion. Diversions were infrequent, and social life was carefully surveyed by the church. For most persons the services of the church provided the best opportunity for seeing friends and learning news.

The church building was thus the main center of community life, but there was little of beauty or comfort about most of these places of worship. They were usually rather dark, very narrow buildings with few windows. There were no fixed pews, and the people had either to stand or to bring their own seats with them. Sometimes there would be accomodation for only a part of the parishioners, the rest having to remain outside.<sup>1</sup>

The minister lived in conditions no more comfortable than the rest of his parish. Light was poor, as well as ventilation, and if his family was large, space was cramped. There was a room set aside for a study or 'closet' to which the minister would go for prayer and the writing of his sermons. There would be a small library with a good selection of the classic works in theology and pastoral helps. The minister's stipend was not large but was sufficient, and it was paid in goods. His clothes were of homespun, a black suit for Sunday and a blue one for week days. The occasional visits that he made to the General Assembly were always eventful for himself and his family.

His duties in the parish were many and tiring. He had to visit each family at certain times a year to catechize its members

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1. Ibid., pp. 286 ff.

on their religious knowledge and to make a short address. Such visits were quite arduous since the roads were sometimes almost non-existent. Then there were the meetings of the Kirk Session, where every rumor of scandal or misconduct was examined and discussed, where discipline was administered, and the parish religious life continually superintended. Presbytery and Synod meetings occurred often enough, however, to break into the routine of daily parish life.

The Sabbath was a day different from the other six, not only because there was preaching, but because of the rigid rules that controlled its observance. The following<sup>1</sup> is a description of the way in which the Sabbath services were usually conducted: At ten o'clock in the morning the first bell rang, and then, shortly, a second one, at which the people entered the church. The precentor led the singing of a psalm, reading out each successive line before it was sung. This lasted until the third bell when the minister entered the pulpit and began the service. The order of worship consisted of a prayer, a lecture on a passage of Scripture, commented on verse by verse, then another prayer, followed by the sermon. The sermon was rarely short and frequently might be the fifth sermon on the same text or the seventh part of a sermon begun some previous Sunday.<sup>2</sup> Afterwards there was a prayer, a psalm, and the benediction.

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1. Ibid., pp. 290-291. For descriptions of two other orders of Sabbath services see: Edgar, Old Church Life in Scotland, p. 64, and Tait, Border Church Life, Vol. I, p. 147.

2. cf. Edgar, op. cit., p. 97.

An interval then followed when some were able to go home to eat while the others remained at the church. For the benefit of the latter two boys were often appointed to ask and answer questions from the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. An afternoon service was next with the same order as before except for the lecture. Each service lasted about two or two and a half hours.

After the worship of the day was finished, conduct was not to be relaxed though there could be a real meal in the evening. After supper the children and the servants were assembled to be catechized, to be examined on what had been said in the sermons of the day, to sing psalms, and to listen to the expounding of Scripture. Such persons as could read were to devote themselves to the reading of devout books.

Attendance at church was not a matter of choice. Elders were ever on the watch for those who did not attend, and even during the services groups were sent out to check on those who were absent. Civil authorities were usually ready to enforce the observance of the Sabbath with severe disciplinary measures. In every district there were strict laws on what might be done. To walk to and fro, to carry a pail of water to the house, to fodder horses or clean their stalls, to grind snuff, to cut kail in the yard--all such offenses were punished without hesitation.<sup>1</sup>

In this way the Sabbath was observed, with diminishing conformity, during the first fifty or sixty years of the century.

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1. Graham, op. cit., p. 317.

The occasion of greatest excitement in the parish was the celebration of the Lord's Supper, held on an average of about once a year. Sometimes several parishes would join together, and it would become a communion season, with the sacrament celebrated every other Sunday in a different parish.

When the news was spread that there was to be a communion, the people began to make preparation to attend, and when the time arrived, the population of the local parish would often be increased four or five times. With so great an influx of people a severe burden was placed on the local congregation, for they were expected to house and feed those who came. As poverty was widespread, food scarce, and houses small, this involved quite a bit of sacrifice. Then, too, the cost of the bread and wine for such crowds was a strain on many a church's funds, and the financial situation of a church sometime postponed the celebration from one year to the next.

When the gatherings were large, they were usually held in the churchyard or an open field, with the ministers taking their place one by one in a wooden erection called the 'tent' from which they preached. The sermons delivered on these occasions "were as a rule neither rhetorical displays nor appeals to sentiment, but careful expositions of Bible doctrine, with measured references to the questions which were before the Church of the day."<sup>1</sup>

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1. MacEwen, The Erskines, p. 12.

Most of the people came to communion with a great deal of awe and spiritual strivings, and when the preachers were 'gospel' men or 'kail-pot' preachers,<sup>1</sup> the crowds were often moved into tears and sighs and groans. They struggled to be sure that they had an interest in Christ and belonged to Him. And so these communions were the occasion of many a revival of religious life.

At communion seasons there were usually two services and sermons on Thursday, two or even three on Saturday, the long services on Sunday, followed by those on Monday. On Sunday the services began at nine o'clock in the morning and continued sometimes well into the night. With several thousand communicants a number of different servings at the tables was required.

Before the people came there was first the 'fencing,' by which all unworthy persons were debarred, and at times this was so expressed that the people did not know whether to come or stay away. The giving of tokens kept away those whom the church considered too ignorant or too scandalous to partake, while the fencing was designed "to show who they are that have a right to the Lord's Supper before God, that so persons may be excited to a due care in examining themselves before they come."<sup>2</sup> In language unmistakable the minister would debar all unbelievers, all unregenerate persons, all the enemies of Christ, naming them one by one. Then he invited all those who loved the Lord Jesus Christ

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1. Because they kept their audiences in such rapt attention that the Sabbath kail simmering at home was forgotten. Cf. Graham, op. cit., p. 308.

2. Tait, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 109.

to come and partake, and the actual serving was begun.

Baptisms and weddings were also the duties of the minister and were usually held in the church. The feasts after the weddings were gay affairs, and the so-called 'penny-weddings,' at which each neighbor contributed one penny Scots or food to help the celebration, were especially so. The church laid down its law against these latter as occasions of drunkenness, profanity, and sensuality.<sup>1</sup> At funerals the minister was present though not in an official capacity, for funerals were treated as civil acts, and no religious ceremony was observed.

Such was life in the countryside of Scotland in the first half of the eighteenth century, and we turn now for a brief glimpse at life in Edinburgh during this same period.

The city of Edinburgh consisted mainly of one long street stretching from Holyrood Palace to the Castle, with the parallel Cowgate on the south. From these main streets there branched off the innumerable wynds and closes in which the people lived and did their business. These ten- and twelve-story dwellings, which lined both sides of the street, must have made an impressive sight, from a distance, at least, for on closer observation one would discover the dirt and filth, dark stairs and strong odors, that characterized the cities at the time.

The crowded quarters of Edinburgh enabled the people to become familiar with one another, especially since persons of quite

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1. Graham, op. cit., pp. 186, 187.

varied levels of life lived on the same stair. The apartments that each family occupied were not spacious, and yet many men conducted their business there, and the ladies were not disturbed at receiving guests in the bedroom. Entertainment on a large scale was done at some public hall or tavern. Public lodging was poor, and Graham remarks that "there was large accomodation for horses and wretched entertainment for men."<sup>1</sup>

Social life was dull, particularly after the Union when Parliament no longer met, and the meetings of the General Assembly did little to enliven the city. Most amusements were frowned upon by the church, and the Kirk Sessions were careful to deal with offenders. The Sabbath was strictly observed though the enforcement of it was more difficult than in the country.

In order to stir up some sort of a social life among themselves, groups of young men formed clubs in which they met to drink and make sport of church and politics. Dancing halls arose for the young people, and in spite of the fact that they were denounced as nurseries of vice, and dancing as an incentive to sensuality, they continued to thrive. Another great 'evil' was the theater, and for a long time there was none in the city. Occasional traveling companies came through, but their performances were always denounced. In 1736, Allan Ramsay built a playhouse in Carrubber's Close, but it was soon closed. So, to evade the law, performances were given under the title of concerts. It

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1. Ibid., p. 283.



was not until after the controversy over the performance of Douglas, in 1756, when the popularity of the theater was very evident even among some ministers of the church, that the official attitude towards it began to change.

But there were amusements on which no ban was placed, one of these being cock-fighting. There were others--golf, archery, and horse-racing. Resort was also made to the numerous taverns for drinking, either to transact business or simply for entertainment. During the General Assembly the taverns were crowded with ministers and elders, and the Lord High Commissioner usually held his receptions at one of the better taverns.

Thus we have a picture of the background on which the events of the early eighteenth century moved. And we proceed now to trace briefly these important occurrences.

The history of the eighteenth century actually begins in 1688, with the Revolution under William and Mary. When the first Scottish Parliament met the following year, it immediately took ecclesiastical matters under its consideration and passed an act that abolished Episcopacy, because it had been "a great and insupportable grievance to this nation, and contrary to the inclination of the generality of the people ever since the Reformation...."<sup>1</sup> This was followed, in 1690, by an act of Parliament re-establishing Presbyterian church government, another act restoring all those Presbyterian ministers who had

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1. As quoted by McKerrow, History of the Secession Church, p. 2.

been ejected for not complying with prelacy, another abolishing patronage, and another requiring the Oath of Allegiance to be sworn in place of all other oaths imposed by preceding Parliaments.

For many Presbyterians the first and last of these acts were unsatisfactory. The first, because it did not expressly declare prelacy to be contrary to the Word of God and abjured by the national covenants. The last, because among the oaths abolished was that of the covenants, and the doors to places of power and trust now seemed open to all whether they subscribed to the covenants or not.<sup>1</sup>

When the first General Assembly met, in 1690, it consisted basically of the sixty ministers still surviving of the number that had been ousted from their parishes at the time of the Restoration. One of the first matters which came to its attention was the question of what should be done with the ministers who had conformed during the years of the Restoration. The general policy agreed upon was that of toleration.<sup>2</sup> However, for one reason or another action was taken against many of the Episcopal incumbents, with the result that several hundred were 'outed,' in addition to those unpopular one who had already been forcibly put out by the people. In 1694, Parliament further encouraged a policy of toleration, by passing an act that the Assembly should maintain in their livings and allow to share

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1. McKerrow, op. cit., p. 2.

2. Cf. Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland 1638-1842, p. 223.

in its government all ministers who would take the Oath of Allegiance, subscribe to the Confession of Faith, and conform to Presbyterian rule, which many Episcopal ministers were willing to do.

That toleration should be the policy of the Assembly aroused much criticism from those who pointed to this as certain evidence of the Assembly's indifference to the cause of God. The defenders of the policy, however, said that the Assembly did not wish to involve the country in fresh troubles or weaken the hand of the new government to which it felt so deeply indebted.

At this time there was unrest in many parts of Scotland, especially in the Highlands, and Jacobite sentiments were still strong among the nobles, lairds, and Episcopal clergy. The memory of King James was fresh in the minds of a large number, and the benefits expected from him made his restoration longed for and awaited. In other sections, where zealous Presbyterians glorified the covenants, William was regarded as an unlawful king, because he had never signed the covenants and, what was worse, was a member of the Church of England.

But in 1702, King William died, and Queen Anne ascended the throne with the approval of the Scottish Estates. In her first speech she broached the subject of Union of the Parliaments, and discussion began without much result. In the following year, as an evidence of the strained relations between the countries, the Scottish Parliament passed an "Act for the Security of the King-

dom." This act stated that after the death of the reigning sovereign without issue, the Estates were to name a successor who would be Protestant, of the House of Stewart, and not the person designated by England, unless Scotland was guaranteed freedom in government, religion, and trade. However, in 1706, commissioners were appointed to discuss Union, and after meeting for several months, a treaty was concluded and ratified by both countries.

Through its influence the church had had inserted a clause that provided for its protection. This clause stated that the Presbyterian church government, as it had been established by various acts of Parliament, with the Confession of Faith, its discipline, and ecclesiastical judicatories, should remain forever unalterable and be "the only government of the Church within the Kingdom of Scotland." It further provided that every sovereign of Britain at his accession should take an oath to protect "the government, worship, discipline, rights, and privileges" of the church.<sup>1</sup>

The difficulties that hindered the workings of the new Union were numerous and continually arose during the subsequent years. At times it seemed that some event would completely disrupt the Union, but in spite of all contrary efforts, it remained firm. There was the unsuccessful attempt by France to support the Jacobite cause with an invasion of Scotland in 1708. Then there were several acts of Parliament that stirred up great discontent. For

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1. As quoted by Burton, op. cit., Vol. VIII, p. 165.

example, the Act of Toleration, designed particularly for the protection of Episcopacy in Scotland; the restoration of patronage, which the church protested against as a breach of the Treaty of Union; and finally, the tax on malt.

Then on August 1, 1714, Queen Anne died. The church during her reign had remained very faithful to the government, even in the latter years when many churchmen began to see the dangers involved in having laws regarding the Church of Scotland passed in London. Instead of finding the Establishment secure, as they had thought at the time of Union, they began to find it subject to the majority of Parliament, which was not always careful to preserve the rights of the Scottish Church. Especially was this evident when the House of Lords, with its Episcopal bishops, became the final court of appeals in legal matters concerning the Church of Scotland. But on the whole the church did support the government, recognizing the similarity of their interests.

Though there was apparent calm at the proclamation of George I as king, a strong undercurrent of unrest existed. The Jacobites felt that the accession of a new king was the moment for an attempted restoration of the Stewart line. So in September 1715, the Earl of Mar raised the standard of James VIII. As the Highland clans rallied around him, and the northern cities supported him, he marched southwards to occupy Perth on September 28th. While he remained in Perth, a small detachment of his troops crossed the Firth of Forth, marched past Edinburgh on into England,

and reached Lancaster in early November. At Preston they were met by a government force and were defeated, ending the rebellion as far as England was concerned.

Meanwhile, the government had taken steps to put down the rebellion in Scotland, and the Duke of Argyle had been placed in command of the forces there, which, though few in number, occupied the most strategic points. Under his leadership the tide of battle also turned against the rebels. Mar advanced into the Lowlands with the main body of his troops, but at the battle of Sheriffmuir he was successfully opposed and had to retreat. In spite of the fact that the Pretender himself landed to add support to the cause, it was only a matter of time until, in the early part of 1716, the leaders fled to France, and the final collapse of the movement occurred. The government naturally took strong action against the rebels, but the following year Parliament gave a general amnesty to the Jacobite prisoners.

In 1714, Mr. Webster, one of the ministers of Edinburgh, called the attention of the General Assembly to the teachings of Professor John Simson, of Glasgow, which teachings were regarded as containing Arminian heresies. A committee was appointed to investigate the charges, and they reported back to the Assembly after a thorough inquiry into the case. Then, in 1717, an act was approved stating that Professor Simson had given offense in his teachings and in his answers to the committee. It went on to say that

it is judged that therein he hath vented some opinions not necessary to be taught in divinity, and that have given more occasion to strife than to the promoting of edification; that he hath used some expressions that bear and are used by adversaries in a bad and unsound sense, ...he hath adopted some hypotheses different from what are commonly used among orthodox divines, that are not evidently founded on Scripture, and tend to attribute too much to natural reason and the power of corrupt nature.<sup>1</sup>

Simson, however, having declared his adherence to the Confession of Faith and disowning all errors opposed to its teachings, was rebuked and ordered not to use such expressions or teach or preach such opinions again. The matter was thus concluded, but not to the satisfaction of a minority, who felt that by not deposing Simson the Assembly had shown a great lack of zeal for the cause of God.

Further dissatisfaction was aroused in this group by the manner in which the Assembly at the same time dealt with the case of Auchterarder Presbytery. This Presbytery attempted to check the progress of Arminianism by formulating certain propositions to be subscribed to before licensure. One of these was: "I believe that it is not sound and orthodox to teach that we must forsake sin in order to our coming to Christ, and instating us in covenant with God." Though the purpose behind this was good, it was badly worded, and when one candidate refused to subscribe to the propositions, the whole case was brought before the Assembly in 1717. This Assembly, after hearing the case, decided that the proposition was unsound as it stood and prohibited the further re-

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1. Acts of the General Assembly, p. 518.

quiring of any subscriptions not approved by the General Assembly.

In view of their action in this case the Assembly was considered as sanctioning the teaching that persons must save themselves from the love and power of sin before coming to Christ, and the minority was further convinced that their leaders had either declined in the faith or at least were indifferent.<sup>1</sup>

In 1718, there appeared a new edition of a book called The Marrow of Modern Divinity, with an introduction by Mr. James Hog, of Carnock. This book had first been printed in England in 1645, and it professed to give the pith and marrow of Reformation doctrine. It consisted largely of extracts from the Reformers' writings and was in the form of a dialogue. Thomas Boston was one of the first to publicize its teachings, and these were soon spread far and wide by sermons and pamphlets. However, opposition arose, headed by Principal Hadow, of St. Andrews, and the book was condemned as Antinomian. Hadow made complaint to the Assembly regarding it, and the matter was taken under consideration. The report of the commission in 1720 charged the Marrow with teaching five errors: (1) Assurance of salvation is essential to faith; (2) atonement and pardon are of universal extent; (3) holiness is not necessary to salvation; (4) fear of punishment and hope of reward are not allowed to be motives of a believer's obedience; (5) the believer is not under

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1. McKerrow, op. cit., p. 10.



law as a rule of life.<sup>1</sup>

The charges were found proved as contrary to Scripture and the Confession of Faith, and so the Assembly declared the book unsound and prohibited its further use and recommendation.

Twelve men, who became known as the "Marrow men," made a representation against this action of the Assembly. A commission examined their complaint, prepared a series of questions to be answered by them, and, when the answers were given in, presented the whole matter to the Assembly of 1722. Ebenezer Erskine had a large share in preparing the representation and the answers, and he gradually assumed the leadership of the group. The Assembly, in acting upon the case, protested against being called defective as the defender of the truth and spoke out again against the Antinomian errors of the Marrow. It stated that "the General Assembly do judge it a very undutiful and uncharitable practice, in any ministers of this Church, to suggest that the Assembly have therein receded from the received doctrine contained in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms."<sup>2</sup>

A positive statement of the church's doctrine on the matters in question was made, with excerpts from the Confession on the various points. The Assembly also said that its previous Act condemning the Marrow was for the purpose of maintaining the truth in its purity, and the said "passages are condemned only in so far as they import the said erroneous opinions, or are applied

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1. Acts of the General Assembly, p. 534.

2. Ibid., p. 552.

by the author to that purpose."<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the Assembly's modifications, another protest was entered, and in the succeeding months the debate grew warm. The "Marrow men" suffered a great deal of ridicule and criticism and were charged with teaching that Christians are under no obligation to divine law, that they do not commit sin, and that God sees no sin in them.<sup>2</sup> But the excitement gradually quieted down.

In 1726, Professor Simson once more occupied the attention of the Assembly. This time he was accused of teaching a revised Arianism and of disobeying the injunction of the 1717 Assembly. Once again the case was slowly dealt with and was not concluded until 1729, when the Assembly found Simson guilty. Again he retracted all his errors, but this time he was suspended from teaching and preaching and the exercise of all ecclesiastical functions. Largely because of his retraction and the difficulties in his case, the sentence of deposition was not passed, though a large minority were in favor of it, and the "Marrow men" found further cause for bewailing the state of affairs in the Church of Scotland.

About this time, also, the matter of patronage began to be troublesome. Patronage had been abolished at the Revolution, and it was against much protest that it was re-established by an act of Parliament soon after the Union, the reason for the

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1. Ibid., p. 552.

2. Henderson, The Religious Controversies of Scotland, pp. 41, 42.

act being that it "had proved inconvenient, and had occasioned great heats and divisions."<sup>1</sup> While Parliament considered these the result of the absence of patronage, the church considered them to be its evils. It stated that

it may easily be gathered what difficulties and hardships presbyteries may be laid under, as to their compliance with this innovation; and what differences, contests, and disorders, may probably ensue betwixt patrons, presbyteries, heritors, and people, besides the known abuses wherewith patronages have been attended, even in their most settled condition.<sup>2</sup>

For some time the more practical evils were not in evidence, since ministers refused to be presented without the approval of the congregation, and presbyteries refused to induct men without the agreement of the church. But gradually this policy died out, and the Assembly began to enforce settlements whether the congregation approved or not. When a patron nominated a minister, what else could the Assembly do, according to the constitution of the church, when no specific charge was brought against the life or doctrine of the presentee, but order him to be inducted?<sup>3</sup> Trouble arose when some of the lower courts refused to induct a man against the wishes of the people, even on the order of the Assembly, and thus the Assembly had to resort to commissions to carry out its decisions. The cases involving these "violent" settlements increased year by year.

Matters were brought to a head when an overture was presented to the Assembly of 1731 for the purpose of making uniform

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1. As quoted by McKerrow, op. cit., p. 31.

2. Acts of the General Assembly, p. 471.

3. McKerrow, op. cit., p. 32.

the settlement of vacant parishes, in cases where the matter devolved upon the presbytery. It was proposed that the election of a minister should belong to the elders and the Protestant heritors, with the congregation having the privilege only of approving or disapproving the person so elected. If they disapproved, they were to lay their reasons before the presbytery, who would be the final judge of their validity. This overture was approved the following year, but with much opposition.

Because of this action and the previous attitude of the Assembly, Ebenezer Erskine took the opportunity as retiring moderator of the Synod of Perth and Stirling to preach a sermon in which he denounced the recent actions of the General Assembly and compared them with the conduct of the Jewish priests and rulers in Christ's day. Several members were offended at his expressions and made formal complaint. The Synod considered the matter and, after discussion, rebuked and admonished Erskine since he refused to admit the impropriety of his remarks.

At the Assembly, in 1733, a protest and appeal against the action of the Synod was entered by Erskine and his friends, William Wilson, Alexander Moncrieff, and James Fisher, but the Assembly sustained the Synod's rebuke. Erskine then stated that he could not submit in silence to this action and, with his fellow-ministers, presented another protest. The Assembly would not allow this to be read, and so it was left lying on the table

where it was later picked up by one of the members of the Assembly. Stopping the proceedings, he read the paper to them. The Assembly became aroused over the manner in which the protest was written, and the ministers were summoned to appear the next day to answer for their conduct in presenting such a paper. When they appeared, they were asked to withdraw their protest and, on refusing to do so, were told to appear before the Assembly's Commission which was to meet in August. They tried to read another paper, but before they could do so, they were ordered to be removed from the room.

These proceedings naturally aroused much interest among the people, and a great deal of attention was focused on the August meeting of the Commission. The four ministers appeared, as ordered, and after examination and continued refusal to withdraw their protest or change their sentiments, they were suspended from all exercise of their ministerial functions. By November, when the next meeting of the Commission was to be held, much sympathy had been excited for the four ministers, and numerous petitions urged light treatment. The four appeared and stated that they had not obeyed the order of the Commission and had continued to exercise their ministerial functions. A vote was then taken, with the moderator casting the deciding vote, in favor of a higher censure. This censure--the severing of their pastoral relationship with their churches--was administered. After it was pronounced, the four ministers submitted a paper

that concluded with a formal declaration of secession, not, however, from the Church of Scotland, but from the prevailing party in the Church.

On December 5, 1733, at Gairney Bridge, the Associate Presbytery was formed by the four seceding ministers. Ralph Erskine and Thomas Mair were present but did not participate. The reasons assigned by the group for taking such action were many, among them: That they were acting in accordance with their professed belief that they were still at liberty to exercise the functions of their ministerial office; that action as a presbytery was most in accord with their principles as Presbyterians; to give relief to those suffering under the yoke of patronage; and to keep a unified spirit among themselves.<sup>1</sup> This meeting was followed some time later by the publication of their first Testimony, stating their position and sentiments, and this in turn was followed by the Articles of Belief, stating their creed.

The Assembly of 1734 was awaited anxiously by many to see what action it would take, and it was hoped that there would be a conciliatory attitude. The Seceders had friends in the whole church; they had become the champions of the people; and they were being looked upon as martyrs.

When the Assembly met, it was quite evident that it would take steps to heal the breach and repair the wrong that had been done the previous year. The act of 1730, discharging the enter-

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1. Ibid., p. 72.

ing of dissents against the decisions of church courts, was repealed. Also the act of 1732, regarding the planting of vacant churches. A petition for the repeal of patronage was sent to Parliament in the hands of a deputation. An act was passed declaring that "due and regular ministerial freedom is still left to all ministers."<sup>1</sup> A complaint of the parish of Auchtermuchty against a violent settlement was sustained. The Synod of Perth and Stirling was empowered to take such action as might be necessary to restore the peace and order of the church.

It seemed that everything possible had been done that could be done. There was wide approval of the Assembly's actions, and it was now felt that the Seceders would immediately return to the Established Church. So confidently did some expect this that the Presbytery of Stirling elected Ebenezer Erskine as moderator, and a commission was appointed to notify him and request him to take the chair. This he refused to do. But the position was left unfilled for some months in the hope that he would finally accept. Then, in 1735, just before the meeting of the Assembly and to the disappointment of many, the Associate Presbytery issued a pamphlet stating the reasons why they could not at that time return to the Established Church. This done, there was little further relationship of a formal nature between the Se-cession and the Established Church for the next three years.

During these three years the Associate Presbytery was occu-

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1. Acts of the General Assembly, p. 630.

pied with organization and with supplying the numerous requests for sermons that were being received. Praying societies had arisen in many parts of the country in the previous century, and now, with growing dissatisfaction towards the Established Church, their numbers had increased. Many of these groups made application that someone be sent to preach to them, and as many as possible were granted.

The Presbytery published its Judicial Testimony in December 1736,

to declare to the world what God had done for the Church of Scotland during former periods of her history; to condemn the manifold defections with which she had been latterly chargeable; to vindicate and establish the truth, in opposition to all prevailing errors; and to stir up, among all classes, a greater zeal for the purity of religion, and for the maintainence of the cause of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

This Testimony served primarily to widen the existing breach between the two groups, for previous to this time the ministers of both had assisted each other at communions and other functions. Now this relationship was severed.

In 1736, there took place in Edinburgh an event which had some influence on the growth of the Secession, and that was the Porteous Riot.

Smuggling was very prevalent in Scotland at this period, and two smugglers who had broken into a customs-house were arrested and sentenced to be executed. One of them was able to make a successful escape, but the execution of the other was

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1. McKerrow, op. cit., p. 103.



duly carried out in the presence of a large and sympathetic crowd. Because the crowd pushed so close around the scaffold and rushed the guard, the captain ordered his soldiers to fire, with the result that several people were killed. This infuriated the crowd, and so the captain, Porteous, was arrested and sentenced to die. Fearing that he would be pardoned, however, a mob quietly gathered one night, broke into the jail, and proceeded to lynch him. This action aroused great indignation, particularly in England, and Parliament passed an act ordering all ministers to read once a month from their pulpits a proclamation urging their people to help discover the murderers of Porteous and bring them to justice. Many ministers refused to obey, and the Seceders were foremost among them, but some in the Established Church did comply. At this many of their members withdrew to associate themselves with the Secession.

In the same year the Assembly heard the report of its commission appointed to investigate charges of heresy against Dr. Campbell, Professor of Ecclesiastical History at St. Andrews. Campbell had written several discourses which were said to contain four erroneous propositions: (1) Man is unable by the use of his natural powers to find out the being of God; (2) the law of nature is sufficient to guide rational minds to happiness; (3) self-love is the only motive and principle of religious actions; (4) the apostles between the Crucifixion and Pentecost concluded that Christ was an imposter.<sup>1</sup> Campbell, however, gave

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1. Cunningham, The Church History of Scotland, Vol. II, pp. 302, 303.

such explanations of what he meant that the Assembly thought it sufficient only to warn him against further use of ambiguous language and to warn others against his supposed errors. The Secession pointed to this case as another evidence of the Assembly's lack of sincerity in zealously standing for the truth.

In 1737 and 1738, the Associate Presbytery was strengthened by the accession of four ministers, Ralph Erskine, Thomas Mair, Thomas Nairn, and James Thomson, and the licensure of another, John Hunter.

The Assembly of 1738 began the final action against the seceding ministers, in consequence of a representation from the Synod of Perth and Stirling, stating

that the said ministers have seceded from this Church without any justifiable grounds, and are continuing in their unwarrantable secession, notwithstanding their own solemn engagements to the contrary at their ordination and admission, the clemency showed to some of them in the year 1734, and the tenderness to all of them ever since.<sup>1</sup>

At the meeting of the Commission in November, it was resolved that a libel should be served against them. The libel was served, and the Associate Presbytery, as a body, appeared before the Assembly the following year, but they stood firm in their position and refused to submit. It was not until the next year, in 1740, that final action was taken by the Assembly. Sentence of deposition was voted and pronounced, and it was this sentence that made the breach between the Secession and the Es-

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1. Acts of the General Assembly, pp. 646, 647.

tablished Church irreparable.

From this time until 1745, the Presbytery was concerned with defending itself against the many oral and written attacks made by members of the Establishment, with caring for an ever-increasing number of adherents, and with supplying the applications for sermon, which came from places as far away as Ireland and the American colonies. Four important matters took place, however, which concerned the Secession.

George Whitefield had attained great popularity through his preaching and orphanage work, and his fame had spread to Scotland. The favorable accounts regarding him influenced the Erskines to begin correspondence, and an invitation was extended to him to make a visit to Scotland. In 1741, he arrived and proceeded to Dunfermline to Ralph Erskine. During his short stay there a conference took place between the Presbytery and himself, but due to differences on church government the Presbytery resolved that unless Whitefield's opinions changed, they would not hear him or employ him in ministerial work.<sup>1</sup> So their brief relationship ended. As a result of Whitefield's part in the Cambuslang Revival and his association with ministers of the Church of Scotland, the Presbytery even became hostile towards him.

The Cambuslang Work, as it was called, was a great religious revival, attended with much emotion and enthusiasm. Thousands of people, thirty thousand at one communion, gathered and

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1. See below, Chapter II.

listened with rapt attention to the preachers, especially Whitefield. Many were moved into ecstasy and tears, trances and paroxysms. But in spite of the amount of emotionalism present, there was evidence of a real revival of religion. However, the attitude of the Associate Presbytery towards the movement was one of unwavering opposition, and they prohibited their members from attending. This antagonism brought forth a great deal of criticism, much of it just, in view of the lasting good that the Revival produced.

A third matter was brought up in 1744, in an overture regarding the terms of communion. It was resolved

That the renovation of the National Covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League and Covenant of the three Nations, in the manner now agreed upon and proposed by the Presbytery, shall be the term of ministerial communion with this Presbytery.<sup>1</sup>

This overture was passed, the effect of it being to make more complete their separation from other Christian groups. Only those who subscribed to the covenants could take communion with the Presbytery, and association with those who had not subscribed was a matter for discipline.

The last important occurrence before the Rebellion was the organization of the Presbytery into a Synod at Stirling, in March 1745. This event illustrates the rapid growth which the Secession had enjoyed during the twelve years of its existence.

After the final action against the seceding ministers, few

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1. As quoted by McKerrow, op. cit., p. 191.

matters of great importance occupied the attention of the Established Church until the Rebellion of 1745. So we proceed to that event, which marks a turning point in Scottish history in the eighteenth century.

The Stewart cause, which had not been very active since Mar's rebellion in 1715, gained new life with the outbreak of war between Britain and France in 1743. A war with France, especially if it involved the landing of French troops in England, was always the Jacobite hope. This was felt to be an essential requirement for the restoration of the Stewarts.

The French planned an invasion of England for February 1744, and a force set sail from Brest for southern England. Due to the weather and the English fleet, however, they were turned back with great loss. This was a discouraging blow, but the son of James, Charles Edward, decided to undertake the journey to Scotland himself, assured that at his coming his countrymen would rise to his support and make him master, at least of all Scotland. With a little money and a supply of arms, he set sail and landed in the west of Scotland in the summer of 1745. His reception was not encouraging, for the chiefs he first met responded coldly to his plans and informed him that rebellion was folly without the backing of French troops. But with persistence and personal appeal Charles began to win over one after the other. By August he felt that he had sufficient backing to gather the friendly clans and raise the standard of James VIII.

The success of the venture was almost hopeless from the beginning, for a large group of the Highland clans refused to have any share in the rebellion, the Lowlands were generally unsympathetic and unfriendly, and the Stewarts had become too closely identified with the Church of Rome.<sup>1</sup>

Action began when Charles and his troops moved south, avoided an engagement with the government forces under General Cope, and occupied Perth. After a week of organization they moved on in the direction of Edinburgh, by way of Stirling and Linlithgow, and were able to enter the capital without much difficulty, though they did not take the Castle. By this time Cope had brought his troops by water back to the south, and they opposed Charles' farther march. But at the battle of Prestonpans the rebels won a complete victory.

On into England they marched, and Carlisle was captured. They passed through Manchester and reached as far as Derby. However, there was no general rising to Charles' cause, his Highland troops were daily deserting him, his officers quarrelled, and the government forces under the Duke of Cumberland opposed any farther advance. A retreat was ordered, and the rebels hurried back towards the Scottish border with the Duke of Cumberland in pursuit.

The Border was crossed, and Glasgow reached on Christmas Day 1745, but no popular support or sympathy was found there.

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1. Brown, History of Scotland, Vol. III, p. 224.

They retreated farther, to Stirling, where their hopes were raised by the defeat of a government army at Falkirk. Then a farther retreat into the Highlands. For a time they had much success in capturing and destroying government forts, but the end of the venture drew near. The final battle was fought at Culloden, where the armies under Cumberland won a complete victory, and the Stewart cause suffered its fatal blow. Charles, however, succeeded in making good his escape to France.

The government recognized three main causes of the Rebellion: the disaffection of the Episcopal clergy, the war-like spirit and habits of the clans, and the hereditary privileges of the lords and gentry, which enabled them to bring an armed force into the field.<sup>1</sup> Steps were immediately taken by Parliament to see that such causes could not operate in the future. The power of the chiefs was taken away, the Episcopal clergy were placed under stringent regulations, and the stern Disarming Act was passed against the clans.

Both the Established Church and the Secession remained faithful to the House of Hanover throughout the Rebellion, even to the extent of raising troops for the government. From the pulpit the ministers warned their congregations against supporting the cause of the Stewarts, though there were probably few who were favorably inclined to it anyway. The connection of the Stewarts with Catholicism was especially stressed.

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1. Ibid., p. 260.

Thus the first half of the century came to an end, and we turn now to those last fifty years that were to prove among Scotland's greatest in point of culture and advancement.

Until about 1760 the life of Scottish country society remained frugal, homely, and provincial. At that period, however, there were distinct signs of a great change coming over tastes, manners, and habits. Wider interests began to stir in the country, more comfortable ways of living to be adopted by the people.<sup>1</sup>

Due to an increase of trade and a general increase in wealth, a transformation began in every area of life. Progress was the key-word, not only in personal comfort, but in business, agriculture, and commerce.

Houses were built for comfort and convenience. The once unvaried diet and the stated hours for meals were changed, with the appearance of new items for the table and later hours of dining. The farmers and country gentry became occupied with building up their farms, increasing the yield, and making use of the latest type of machinery. With increased incomes and better communication between city and country, new styles were quickly adopted. There were new clothes, new manners, new conveniences.

Agriculture became modernized as old prejudices lost their hold and ancient customs died out. Revolutionary changes took place in the Highlands. The feudal chiefs were transformed into landowners and farmers whose primary interest and standard of success was money. The custom of 'run-rig' was gradually

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1. Graham, op. cit., p. 56.



abolished. Fields were no longer leased for only one or two years. Small farms were merged into large ones. New machinery began to be used on a wide scale. Times had changed, and daily life had changed, and many people were forced to go to the cities or abroad in order to find a living.

In the cities life also made progress. There were still the crowded quarters, the dirty streets, the dark and filthy stairs, the multitude of taverns, the quiet Sabbaths, and the orthodox clergy. But wealth and progress and contact with the outside world were having their effect. As in the country, the manners and dress and speech and habits were changing, the uncouthness, provincialism, and broadness disappearing. Society became more fashionable. Young men from the country came into the city with their new wealth and took up lodgings. Dancing assemblies and private parties became more numerous.

As Edinburgh began to grow rapidly, new quarters were built south of the city to accomodate the overflow, and then newer houses still, to the north in the New Town. Society began to move out of its crowded space on the High Street into these more spacious accomodations, leaving their former quarters to the poorer and less fashionable. The end of the old era had come.

The Sabbath and other features of the religious life were relaxed and broadened. The churches were not as crowded, interest in religious matters not so great, as things of a more

secular nature began to appeal to the people. The ban on the theater was lifted, and some of the clergy were numbered among its most faithful adherents. Drinking remained a favorite pastime, and the taverns still offered a hearty welcome.

About the middle of the century there was an awakening of intellectual life in Edinburgh and Scotland. Hume, with his Treatise of Human Nature and his History of England, Home, with his tragedy of Douglas, Robertson, with his History of Scotland, and, later, Burns, with his poems and characterizations of Scottish life, were the leaders in this movement. Adam Ferguson, Hugh Blair, Adam Smith, and others soon made Edinburgh "a literary center and literature a matter of fashion to gentlemen."<sup>1</sup> As one looked down from the windows of High Street in 1771, opposite the place where the old Market Cross had stood, there were more men of note to be seen in an afternoon than could have been seen before in a century.<sup>2</sup> Scotland's place is indicated in this somewhat sarcastic sentence by Voltaire: "It is an admirable result of the progress of the human spirit that at the present time it is from Scotland we receive rules of taste in all the arts--from the epic poem to gardening."<sup>3</sup>

Scotsmen were also pioneers in the field of physical science, and it was by the development of her natural resources as well as her contribution to the realm of ideas that Scotland achieved her progress. Following the Rebellion of 1745, the

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1. Ibid., p. 114.

2. Ibid., p. 115.

3. As quoted by Brown, op. cit., p. 295.

nation had the first real opportunity for the development of her resources. There was no struggle to distract her, communication with England was frequent and more cordial, the ideas and stimulus of other nations reached her more directly, and she had the minds capable of making use of these various factors. Thus one could describe this half century as "the period of her most energetic, peculiar, and most various life."<sup>1</sup>

From 1745 until 1789, a national political life was virtually non-existent. Most events of importance were connected more with the history of Britain than with that of Scotland. The Scottish representatives in Parliament were hardly more than a small group in the various English factions struggling for power. In 1775, Henry Dundas assumed the office of Lord Advocate, beginning his thirty years of activity that exerted such a great influence over his native Scotland. The nation was aroused at the time of the American Revolution by the possibility of a French and Spanish invasion. It was still more shaken by the outbreak of the French Revolution.

At first there was much sympathy for events in France, but with the execution of Louis XVI and the defeat of the British army at Dunkirk, dread that a similar revolt might occur in Britain occupied the minds of many people. Those who were in favor of electoral reforms were accused of advocating revolution, and some were even arrested and tried for sedition. There was again

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1. As quoted by Ibid., p. 255.

the fear of invasion. But when the eighteenth century passed into history, these fear and worries had gradually subsided.

The current movements at work in the nation naturally had their effect on the church. The industrial expansion was diverting the minds of the people from the next world to this one. Scepticism and rationalism were gaining prevalence among the educated classes and weakening the influence of the old theology. It was in an attempt to adjust the church to these new movements that the Moderate party arose.

The Church of Scotland, during the second fifty years of the century, was characterized by the ascendancy of this party. Its creed remained the Confession of Faith, but a wide latitude of opinion was allowed. Emphasis was on good works rather than theology or belief. Emotion was frowned upon, and correct speech and style were encouraged. The pleasures of this world were recognized. The policy of the Moderates seemed to be "to fill the Church with ministers who by their teaching and social qualities would commend religion to the classes whose adhesion it was in the interest of a national church to secure."<sup>1</sup>

As we have seen, the break with the Associate Presbytery was made complete with the pronouncement of the sentence of deposition in 1740. But because of the number of friendly and sympathetic ministers still in the national church and because the secession was so recent and its numbers increasing, there

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1. Brown, op. cit., p. 290.

was a tendency, in the decade that followed, to proceed rather slowly in matters of patronage and discipline, though both were firmly administered. Between 1739 and 1752, there were no less than fifty-three disputed settlements, many enforced only with military support. As the years passed, however, the Assembly began to discount the possibility of further secession, and the Moderates took a firmer hold on its meetings. The Moderates pressed for the absolute subordination of all lower courts to the Assembly, particularly in the matter of patronage, for many presbyteries had still shown an unwillingness to intrude ministers. In 1752, six ministers of the Presbytery of Dunfermline refused to take part in an induction, in spite of the Assembly's order. One of these, Thomas Gillespie, was singled out and deposed by the Assembly. Some nine years later Gillespie with two other ministers founded the Relief Presbytery, to give relief to those suffering under the yoke of patronage.

Year by year the number of Moderates increased, principally because Moderatism reflected the tone and opinion of the day. The party had its greatest influence under the leadership of William Robertson, Principal of Edinburgh University, in the thirty years following the deposition of Gillespie.

Though the Moderates were in the majority, there was an influential minority of Evangelicals, or so-called 'High-Flyers,' who remained the popular party. They had the support of the masses of the people, who were interested in religion and who

desired a less intellectual and a more devotional type of preaching than that supplied by the Moderates. It was largely due to this minority that such matters as the Playhouse affair and the writings of Hume and McGill came to the attention of the Assembly. They made their influence felt. When the Secession made rapid gains, the Evangelicals, in 1766, overtured the Assembly for an investigation into the main causes of schism and the evils of patronage. This was defeated, but only by a narrow margin.

In December 1756, the tragedy of Douglas was performed in the theater in the Canongate. That the play was performed at all was bad, but what made it worse was the fact that it had been written by a minister, Mr. John Home, and was witnessed by several ministers. Many of the clergy were shocked that one of their number could think so lightly of his calling as to produce a play full of oaths and suicide, and that it should be encouraged by the attendance of other clergymen. The Presbytery of Edinburgh bewailed the declining state of religion that when war and poverty were scourging the land some ministers should be encouraging the playhouse. The Assembly upheld the libel of the Presbytery against Alexander Carlyle, one of those attending, and a warning was passed "that none of the ministers of this Church do, upon any occasion, attend the theatre."<sup>1</sup> However, some years later opinion had so changed on this matter that the

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1. Acts of the General Assembly, p. 729.

Assembly had to adjust its agenda to allow members the opportunity of seeing Mrs. Siddons perform.

David Hume and his writings also came to the attention of the Assembly in 1756. His Essay on Miracles, rejecting miracles in a body on the ground of the insufficiency and unreliableness of human testimony, occasioned a great flurry of pamphlets in the church. In 1756, the Assembly expressed its utmost abhorrence of impious and infidel principles, plainly directed at Hume. The following year an attempt was made to bring him to trial for heresy, but this failed. Moreover, since Hume was not a member of the church, this would have been difficult to do.

In the year 1778, a bill was passed in Parliament for the relief of Roman Catholics in the matter of civil and religious liberty. This dealt only with England. When it was rumored that a similar measure was to be introduced for Scotland, the whole nation was stirred. The masses, the educated, and all branches of the church protested such a measure. In 1779, riots broke out against the Catholics, and the homes and persons of those in favor of the bill were often in danger. The General Assembly, in 1779, said that the passage of this act "would be highly inexpedient, dangerous, and prejudicial to the best interests of religion and civil society in this part of the United Kingdom."<sup>1</sup> The protests were so great and so numerous that the proposed measure was withdrawn.

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1. Ibid., p. 802.

In 1786, Dr. William McGill published his book on the death of Christ, in which he attributed no objective character to the atonement as a satisfaction to divine justice. Christ's death, he said, was purely a part of His message, only an incident in His career, and not the culmination. A committee was appointed to investigate his views, and it found him guilty of error regarding the original and essential dignity of the Son of God, the doctrine of the atonement by Christ's sufferings and death, the method of reconciling sinners to God, and subscription to the Confession.<sup>1</sup> In 1790, he retracted all his errors and submitted to censure, but many felt the sentence to be extremely light.

Thus it may be seen that the majority of the church were becoming more reconciled to the world and its influences and less inclined to controversy and discord.

In the later years of the Moderate ascendancy, the patrons began to misuse their privileges in such a way as to excite a great deal of indignation. Even one of the Moderates accused them of presenting "the least capable, and commonly the least worthy, of all the probationers in their neighbourhood."<sup>2</sup> Instead of raising the standard of the ministry as it had hoped, Moderatism found itself disappointed. The church was being filled with men who knew more of the ways to influence a patron than of the things of religion. The indifference of the clergy dis-

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1. Henderson, op. cit., p. 89.

2. Carlyle, Autobiography, p. 555.



couraged the best of the laity, and the indifference of the laity discouraged the clergy. So, gradually the popular party began to grow in numbers. In 1781, Principal Robertson resigned the leadership of the Moderates, and by 1785, Henry Wellwood, leader of the Evangelicals, was elected as Moderator of the Assembly.

The French Revolution had a great influence on the church. Fear of revolt caused the church to put a ban on Sunday Schools as possible agencies of sedition. The Assembly, in 1796, expressed its disapproval of missions to the heathen, though a different stand had been taken earlier. But such actions were the results of the aftermath of the French Revolution and were not to be characteristic of the time when fear of revolt no longer existed.

We leave the Established Church at the end of the century in a time of transition, with a new leadership coming into power, and with new ideas and new opinions doing away with those which had held sway for so long.

In the Secession, after the Rebellion, the most important incident is that which occurred in 1747. It was in March of 1745 that the matter of the burgess oath first came to the official attention of the Synod. These oaths, required in certain cities, contained a clause which said: "I profess, and allow with my heart, the true religion presently professed within this realm, and authorized by the laws thereof." The ques-

tion arose as to what was meant by "the true religion presently professed within this realm." One group interpreted these words as equivalent to giving approval to the corruptions in the Church of Scotland, while the other disagreed. The matter was taken under discussion and was debated at great length. After a very heated session in the spring of 1747, the Synod split upon the matter, and two separate groups resulted, each claiming to be the true Associate Synod, each denouncing the other, and each, finally, pronouncing the sentence of deposition and excommunication upon the other. The names given to the two bodies are Burgher and Anti-Burgher, depending on which side of the question they took. Throughout the remainder of the eighteenth century the two bodies remained separate, and it was not until 1820 that there was a reunion.

On April 10, 1747, the Associate Anti-Burgher Synod held its first meeting in Edinburgh, and on June 16, 1747, the Associate Burgher Synod held its first meeting in Stirling. Though each pursued its own course, their subsequent actions and history proved very similar. At first they were taken up with matters of organization and adjustment to the state of affairs. They were both greatly concerned about maintaining the purity of doctrine and deplored the sad neglect of religion and its waning influence, laying the blame largely on the indifference of the national church. When such events as the performance of Douglas and the trial of Dr. McGill occurred, these Synods enter-

ed the field of discussion with lively activity. Public fasts were frequently held for national sins and the low state of the true religion. The Testimony was republished. Acts were passed against Arminianism and other errors. Careful watch was kept over the life of their own members, and some were severely dealt with. The sins of the national church, particularly patronage, were continually pointed out.

In both Synods there was much interest in the cause of missions, especially to the American colonies, and the numerous requests for supply met with a surprisingly good response. An active part was taken in protesting against the relaxation of restrictions against Roman Catholics, and the Burgher Synod issued a special "Warning Against Popery."

Before the end of the century the peace within the ranks of the Secession was broken again. In 1795, as the result of the Old and New Light controversy, there was another division, splitting the Secession into four groups. The cause of this new division was the reinterpretation by some of the binding power of the covenants.

Here we end this brief discussion of a great century in Scotland's history. The life and events we have presented formed the plane on which the ministers of this study moved and from which they drew the method and matter of their preaching.

## CHAPTER II

### Ralph Erskine (1685-1752)

The city of Dunfermline is situated in the western part of Fifeshire, about three miles from the Firth of Forth. An historic city, a former royal residence, it was, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, on the eve of becoming an industrial center. The population of the Burgh and Parish, in 1701, is estimated at five thousand. In 1755, it is given as 8552.

At the opening of the century it is recorded that "much distress and poverty prevailed,"<sup>1</sup> with trade depressed. But in the second decade there were the beginnings of the weaving trade, with damask weaving introduced into the parish in 1718. From this small beginning there gradually developed an industry that soon made Dunfermline renowned for the quality and extent of its linen manufacture. Other smaller industries, like a snuff mill and a wheat mill, made their appearance and provided work for a growing population.

In the first fifty years of the century the city consisted mainly of the High Street, with a few streets branching off to the north and south. The old nave of the Abbey was used as the parish church. But as the century progressed, and the population increased, new houses were built, and the city began to

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1. Henderson, The Annals of Dunfermline and Vicinity, p. 369.

spread out.

Life in Dunfermline was much like that in any provincial town. Closely allied with the land, it was affected by famines and crop failures. Its social life was under the careful watch of the church, with the Sabbath properly observed, and moral errors quickly dealt with. Cock-fighting was introduced in 1705, but it was not until 1751 that the first dancing school was opened.

It was in this city that the Rev. Ralph Erskine spent his forty-one years as a minister.

Ralph Erskine (or Areskine, as the name was often spelled) was born on March 15, 1685, at Monilaws in Northumberland, where his father was living in exile. He was the son of the Rev. Henry Erskine, who had been expelled at the Restoration, and who subsequently had endured the various tribulations of a covenanting preacher. After living for a number of years near Dryburgh as a poor crofter doing occasional preaching, he had been arrested, sentenced to imprisonment on the Bass Rock, but allowed to go into exile instead, actually imprisoned for a while at Newcastle, and finally allowed to preach as an indulged minister. His second wife was Margaret Halcro, a native of the Orkneys, and she was the mother of Ralph. Both Henry Erskine and his wife were of good background and closely related to many of the nobility.

After the Revolution Henry Erskine was inducted to the

parish of Chirnside, and it was here that Ralph spent his childhood. He learned the rudiments of his education no doubt largely from his father and at schools in the neighboring towns. From early indications of talent and piety, it was determined to give him an education that would prepare him for the ministry.

Little is known of his boyhood, but from one or two anecdotes related about him during that period, it seems that he was religiously inclined. This is not surprising, however, when one recalls the strict religious training and atmosphere of the times, especially in the manse.

On August 10, 1696, his father died, and this event made a deep impression on the eleven year old boy as he records in his diary thirty-five years later when recounting special mercies shown to him: "I took special notice also of the Lord's drawing out my heart towards him at my father's death, and yet how early my rebellions against him began to work."<sup>1</sup>

Prayer was an exercise that he seems to have enjoyed a great deal in his youth. In early notebooks he wrote such petitions as these:

Lord, put thy fear in my heart. Let my thoughts be holy, and let me do for thy glory, all that I do. Bless me in my lawful work. Give a good judgment and memory--a firm belief in Jesus Christ, and an assured token of thy love.<sup>2</sup>

He entered the University of Edinburgh in November 1699, and studied for four consecutive terms, proceeding then to the study of theology. He applied himself well to the study of Latin, Greek, Logic, and Philosophy, and began to show a skill

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1. Fraser, The Life and Diary of the Reverend Ralph Erskine, p. 26.  
 2. Ibid., p. 25.

at composing verse, which continued to be one of his great talents. He appears to have been sentimental and meditative, and his student letters, mostly in Latin, "are distinctly above the prevailing level of scholarship."<sup>1</sup>

In his first year at the University there occurred a great fire in Parliament Square, where he lived, which almost entirely destroyed the area, and he himself barely escaped with a few books. In his diary he looks back on this event as a special evidence of God's mercy towards him: "I took special notice also of what took place upon my first going to Edinburgh to the College, in the burning of the Parliament Close; and how mercifully the Lord preserved me, when he might have taken me away in my sin, amidst the flames of that burning, which I can say my own sins helped to kindle."<sup>2</sup>

After 1703, he spent his vacations with his brother Ebenezer at the Portmoak manse, and his days there, especially with his sister-in-law, did much to develop his evangelical beliefs and spiritual sentiments. "That profound sense of sin, and of the saving providence of God, which was the staple of Scottish religion...took possession of him...."<sup>3</sup> In 1705, he became chaplain and tutor in the home of John Erskine, a distant relative, the grandfather of Dr. John Erskine, of Old Greyfriars Church, Edinburgh. He held this position until 1709, continuing at the same time his theological studies.

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1. MacEwen, op. cit., p. 26.

2. Fraser, op. cit., pp. 26, 27.

3. MacEwen, op. cit., p. 27.

He was very interested in the religious services of the day, repeatedly partook of communion at many different places, and attended the preaching of a number of ministers. His notebooks of this period contain, along with excerpts of religious books and transcripts of old manuscript sermons, the notes of the discourses that he heard. It was his practice to write down his opinion of a sermon's merits, and his opinions on the sermons of nearly a hundred clergymen were generally favorable. Most of the sermons were preached at times of communion, "which seem to have deeply interested his susceptible mind, and occupied much of his devout attention."<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding his talents and piety, it was with some difficulty that he was persuaded to make application for licensure, as he had a deep sense of his unfitness and unworthiness for such an office. He had much help and encouragement from Colonel Erskine, but particularly from his brother Ebenezer.

In character Ebenezer and Ralph were somewhat different. Ralph had certain native gifts that set him apart.

Versatile, sympathetic and genial, he possessed a naïve humour and a lively fancy which gave picturesqueness and interest to almost everything that he wrote. A keen critical faculty was tempered by warmth of affection and glowing devoutness, and, from the first, he showed that whole-hearted zeal for the truths of personal religion which rarely fails to lead to eminent service.<sup>2</sup>

Ebenezer, on the other hand, while having fewer natural talents, had a self-contained calmness and a stronger and more independent

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1. Fraser, op. cit., p. 31.

2. MacEwen, op. cit., p. 29.



mind, which quickly raised him to a place of leadership.<sup>1</sup>

Towards the end of 1708, Ralph was proposed to the Presbytery of Dunfermline to be entered on trials. He delivered a lecture on Hosea 6. On January 5, 1709, he delivered a homily from Hebrews 11:6. He read his common head, "In what does the eternal happiness of the saints formally consist," defended his thesis, and made an addition. He gave an exercise on Ephesians 3:2, and then, on June 8th, he delivered a popular sermon on Ephesians 5:15. All his exercises were approved, and, "having subscribed the Confession of Faith coram, the Presbytery did, and hereby do receive the said Mr. Ralph Erskine to preach the gospel within these bounds, and wherever, in providence, he should be orderly called."<sup>2</sup> His first public sermon was a week later on June 14th, at Culross, on 2 Corinthians 3:5.

After more than a year, he received a unanimous call from the parish of Tulliallan and a call from the second charge at Dunfermline. Although this latter involved more work and less stipend, he accepted it, and on August 7, 1711, he was ordained to that charge.

For a number of years prior to 1710, Dunfermline had been without a parish minister. But in November of that year, Mr. Thomas Buchanan was inducted to the first charge, with Ralph Erskine coming to the second charge some nine months later. The two seem to have cooperated harmoniously, though they were per-

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1. Ibid., p. 29.

2. "Records of the Presbytery of Dunfermline," as quoted by Fraser, op. cit., p. 40.

haps not altogether congenial.<sup>1</sup> In 1715, Buchanan died, and Erskine succeeded him in the first charge. Due to disagreements and difficulties, the second charge was not filled immediately, and so high were feelings that communion was not held for two years. But in 1718, James Wardlaw was called and inducted, and between these two ministers there seems to have been a close relationship, at least until 1740.

As a parish minister Erskine was faithful in performing the duties demanded of him. He and his colleague preached regularly on Sunday, morning, afternoon, and generally night, also on Thursday, or some other suitable week night, each taking his turn. Erskine considered the exposition of a part of the Bible on Sunday an essential part of the service, and his manuscripts indicate that in the early part of his ministry he expounded the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, the Acts of the Apostles, and then proceeded to the Apostolic Epistles.<sup>2</sup>

The Lord's Supper was celebrated once a year, unless something arose to prevent it, and Erskine especially prepared himself for these occasions. Before the one in 1732, he records:

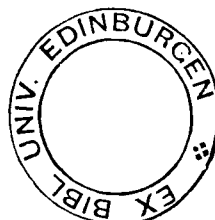
This morning, after wakening, I had some thoughts that this might be the last Action sermon that ever I might have, and I was affected. I read Psalm 67 with some application and affection, and then prayed, and had my heart poured out in prayer. I was made to wrestle with him for his promised presence, for his Spirit and blessing. I sought his presence particularly on this occasion, and that the Spirit might be sent to glorify Christ as the Lamb in the midst of the throne; expressing my hope.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Fraser, op. cit., p. 95.

2. Ibid., p. 54.

3. Ibid., pp. 54, 55.



Being a popular preacher, the communions at which he presided were attended by large crowds of people. He records on July 10, 1737, that "I preached half an hour before the action began, about half before eight in the morning upon Matt. 3:17. The tables began to be served a little after nine, and continued till about twelve at night, there being betwixt four and five thousand communicants."<sup>1</sup>

In his pastorate he did not neglect his studies, and he spent as much time as possible in widening his knowledge. He particularly studied theology and read what volumes were available. His diary gives no regular account of his reading, but it does occasionally mention books which he read. Owen, Manton, Flavel, and Boston were highly valued, and he repeatedly expressed his approval of Boston's work on the Covenant of Grace.<sup>2</sup>

The Bible, however, was the book that he read and studied above all others. He read the authorized English version and committed many passages to memory. He would mark with an asterisk passages that had been of value, and also on one of the blank leaves made a list of verses entitled texts "that have been sweet and useful to my soul."<sup>3</sup> Then in notebooks he would

1. Ibid., p. 233.

2. Fraser, op. cit., p. 48. Others mentioned are: Bates, Durham, Hutcheson, Jenks, Preston, Morning Exercises, Grotius on the Truth of Christianity, Gurnal on the Devices of Satan, Brown and Watts on Prayer, Vine on the Sacraments, Doddridge on the Care of Souls, Rollock's Sermons, Hogg on the Spirit, Clarendon's History, De Laune's Plea for Non-conformists, and the Bishop of Cork on the Human Understanding.

3. Ibid., p. 398.

record lists of texts according to the purpose for which they were selected. For instance, there were classes like: 'Texts for ordinary Sabbaths,' 'Texts for week-days,' 'Texts for fast-days,' and 'Texts for sacramental occasions.'<sup>1</sup> He did not neglect the original scriptures, and one of his notebooks contains an abridgment of part of a Hebrew grammar, to the study of which he began to apply himself more closely in 1726. He frequently continued his studies till late at night, and his diary of November 27, 1739, is not exceptional: "It was very early this day before I went to bed, having studied till after four in the morning."<sup>2</sup> He consulted many commentaries, but gave his preference to Matthew Henry.

With few exceptions his sermons were fully written out, following his preparatory study, but later in life he did much preaching through necessity with little previous study. His diary records for October 7, 1731: "Also, my eyes were towards him for a word this day, being to preach, and not knowing yet what to think of for the subject."<sup>3</sup> And again for November 4, 1739, he writes: "Though I had studied little I preached on that word, Zech. 8:19, 'Love the truth and peace.'"<sup>4</sup>

Although it was not the custom at this period to read one's sermons, but rather to preach from memory, Erskine kept very close to his notes, and his portrait shows him with sermon-book

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1. Ibid., p. 53.  
 2. Ibid., p. 268.  
 3. Ibid., p. 50.  
 4. Ibid., p. 268.

in his hand.<sup>1</sup> He had the habit of raising his hand when he spoke, and this was his characteristic gesture. It is said that in the pulpit he had "a pleasant voice, an agreeable manner, a warm and pathetic address."<sup>2</sup>

Besides his preaching he was occupied with his many pastoral duties. It was his custom, together with his colleague, to visit every home in his parish once a year for examination. With over five thousand parishioners this was quite a task, and efforts were made in 1730, without success, to have two other churches erected in different parts of the parish.<sup>3</sup> At some periods he seems to have held weekly sessions of catechizing for the young, and a catechism was drawn up for their use. Fellowship meetings, mainly for prayer, were begun in several districts. He was occupied a great deal in visiting the sick, dying, and bereaved, giving them instruction and consolation, and offering up prayer with and for them. He often visited condemned prisoners. Much attention was shown towards the poor, and various schemes were tried for their relief. Subscriptions were also gathered for missions in the Highlands and the American colonies.

He considered it his duty to deal with offenses and to use all efforts to prevent vice. He believed in the exercise of vigorous discipline to recover open transgressors, and his Session made repeated efforts to preserve the proper observance of the Sabbath and to prevent the revellings at 'penny' weddings.

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1. Gordon, "Ralph Erskine," article in the Dictionary of National Biography.

2. Fraser, op. cit. p. 481.

3. Henderson, Annals, p. 421.

Erskine took an active part in the church courts and seems to have attended Presbytery meetings regularly and participated in their proceedings. On being elected Moderator, he states in his diary: "This day I was chosen Moderator of the Presbytery; and after dinner, I left the Presbytery a little, and came to my room; and there got liberty, with tears, to beg the Spirit of God to be with me, to assist and to strengthen me, that I might do nothing dishonouring to his name, and might be helped to my duty."<sup>1</sup>

He was careful of his own spiritual life and spent much time in his private devotions. He appears to have made it his practice to pray morning, noon, and night, and besides these regular periods to pray as occasion demanded. It was his custom to read a portion of Scripture just before private prayer, and he often read this on his knees. In his reading he seems to have progressed chapter by chapter, but sometimes he would read from different books at the same time, comparing them. He always followed his reading with meditation and prayer.

Besides his private devotions he also had family prayers, morning and evening, at which there would be the singing of psalms, reading of the Bible, and prayer. On some occasions he would appoint a special day for prayer or abasement, and he would keep his children at home from school. On these days he would usually talk with the family in addition to the other ex-

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1. Fraser, op. cit., pp. 163, 164.

ercises. On one day he states: "Instead of speaking with the family betwixt prayer and praise, I read some of Mr. Boston's notes on fasting, and what is forbidden in every command in the Larger Catechism."<sup>1</sup>

The life of his family was strict, religiously centered, grave, and solemn, as the homes of ministers were, but Erskine had a geniality and affectionateness, humor and wit, that were most helpful. He played the violin quite well, and it was with much sadness that his grave elders admitted he was "nane the waur for his tunes on the wee sinful fiddle."<sup>2</sup> He was able also to draw spiritual lessons from the smoking of tobacco. And in the midst of all his various activities he found time to compose his Gospel Sonnets, which struck a responsive chord in the lives of the common people. While he himself had no illusions as to their literary merit, he wrote them to present gospel truth in a form that could be easily remembered, and no doubt to the people of his day they seemed fresh and even beautiful.<sup>3</sup>

The performance of his pastoral duties, however, did not prevent him from taking part in the events that were happening at the time in the church and nation.

He objected to the act of Parliament restoring patronage. He refused to take the Oath of Abjuration and opposed the Toleration Act. He was loyal to the government during the Rebel-

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1. Ibid., p. 409.

2. MacEwen, op. cit., p. 46.

3. Ibid., pp. 49, 50.

lion of 1715, and on King George's accession he composed and published a poem entitled "A Congratulatory Poem on King George's Coronation." He was dissatisfied with the treatment accorded Professor Simson by the Assembly on his first trial, and also with the manner in which the Assembly dealt with the Presbytery of Auchterarder.

When the case of the Marrow arose, he was one of the twelve who protested against the act of the Assembly prohibiting its use. Later he was arraigned before his Synod for having violated this act, and he was strictly ordered to observe it in the future. The Synod also required its members to subscribe to the Confession anew in a sense agreeable to the Assembly's act regarding the Marrow, but this Erskine refused to do. In defense of the Marrow he issued a number of tracts, and his sermons were full of its doctrines.

The second of the Simson trials followed, and Erskine deplored the Assembly's sentence, which he felt was too light for such a serious offense. He published several tracts and pamphlets giving warning against Arianism. His poem, The Believer's Principles, was composed as a popular presentation of the debated doctrines.

As the rights of patrons began to be pressed, he stood out in his Presbytery for the right of the people to choose their own minister. He refused to acquiesce in the violent settlement of a minister at Kinross, and took an active part in de-



fending the Presbytery before the Commission for having refused to induct the minister. Though the Presbytery did, finally, enroll the presentee, he and others refused to acknowledge him as the pastor of Kinross because he had not been approved by the congregation. Erskine, in 1732, strongly opposed the overture regarding the planting of vacant churches.

When his brother and friends were dealt with by the Synod and Assembly in 1733, he was very sympathetic, and at the November meeting of the Commission he gave in a paper adhering to the protest that they had originally presented. He continued to treat them as ministers and permitted them to preach for him. In his diary he states: "This day my brother Ebenezer preached in Dunfermline for me and my colleague. We freely employed him, though suspended by the Commission."<sup>1</sup>

His diary also records the formation of the Associate Presbytery that followed:

This night my brother came; and the next day, Tuesday Dec. 4, I went with him to the Bridge of Gairney, where he and his other three brethren spent all the Wednesday in prayer and conference, and also the Thursday: and thereafter, about two o'clock, came to the resolution of constituting themselves into a presbytery, which accordingly they did, and Mr. Mair and I were witnesses. There was, I thought, much of the Lord with them; and I found my heart frequently warmed and drawn out in prayer with them. They appointed their next meeting of Presbytery to be in Dunfermline, February, the first Wednesday thereof.<sup>2</sup>

Ralph Erskine did not immediately join the Secession since he was not certain that secession was the best means of testify-

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1. Fraser, op. cit., p. 203.

2. Ibid., pp. 206, 207.

ing against the defections of the times. But his views on all points were practically the same as those of the Seceders. He claimed that a Christian minister must have liberty to speak his own mind; he opposed the interference of the state with the settlement of the church; he advocated the rights of the people to select their own minister; and he deplored the unwillingness of the Assembly to speak out for the truth.

It seemed that the Assembly, in 1734, would take steps to rectify its past faults, but when it failed to deal with Professor Campbell two years later and continued to enforce violent settlements, Erskine began more seriously to consider joining the Secession. After much reflection and communication with the brethren of the Associate Presbytery, he decided that it was best to join them. On January 29, 1737, he wrote in his diary:

I had many struggles in my mind about secession from the judicatories and joining with the four brethren. I wrote a letter to Mr. Mair concerning my scruples; who having sent my line to Messrs. Wilson and Moncrieff, they wrote letters, which to me were weighty, and induced me to a farther consideration of that affair, till I was brought to think of joining them in the matter of the judicial testimony.<sup>1</sup>

He and Mair discussed it at some length. Mair was determined to proceed with secession, and Ralph finally agreed. He laid a paper of adherence to Mair's Declaration of Secession, first before the Presbytery of Dunfermline on February 16, 1737, and then before the Associate Presbytery. The two men were re-

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1. Ibid., p. 212.

ceived into the Secession and adhered to the Testimony, which was about to be published. With his talents and abilities as a preacher and writer Ralph Erskine made a valuable addition. In January 1738, he was elected Moderator.

On May 12, 1740, he, with the rest of the Presbytery, was deposed by the Assembly. This action he considered unscriptural and unwarrantable, and he denounced the Assembly in no uncertain terms.

When it was evident what action the Assembly would take against the seceding brethren, a collection was begun in Dunfermline for the erection of a new meeting house. While this was being made, a tent was erected in which Erskine conducted service one part of the day, while during the other part, as long as possible, he preached in the parish church. In 1741, the new church was finished and opened for worship.

Erskine continued to use the parish church, however, until 1742, when his colleague, Mr. Wardlaw, died. Wardlaw had been very friendly to the Secession, and some meetings had taken place in his home, but he himself remained in the Established Church. When Erskine seceded, he records that his "colleague was displeased at this step."<sup>1</sup> But they continued to cooperate well, and it was not until the sentence of deposition was pronounced that their intimate pastoral relationship ceased, though there had been some friction. A manuscript from the time describes what conditions had developed:

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1. Ibid., p. 233.

There was also a pulpit war betwixt Mr. Erskine and Mr. Wardlaw, which continued till Mr. Erskine was put out of the kirk. What Mr. Erskine spoke in the forenoon with respect to the defection and backslidings of the Established Church, and the lawfulness and necessity of the brethren's separating from them, Mr. Wardlaw contradicted in the afternoon, saying, that the Associate Presbytery were unnatural children, and ought to have pleaded with their mother, and that it was at best a setting up of altar against altar. Much was said on both sides, and many Scriptures cited.<sup>1</sup>

When the Assembly, in 1742, took steps to fill the pulpit, Erskine ceased to preach in the parish church, not, however, without issuing three Solemn Warnings against deserting his ministry. But in spite of his stern warnings only fourteen out of twenty-six elders followed him, and while most of his people did, so that he could say, "I know not of seven or eight persons, among all the 8000 examinable people of this parish, but seem to be still satisfied to subject themselves to my ministry in peace,"<sup>2</sup> yet many soon drifted back to the parish church when a new minister was inducted there.

In his church he continued to have the usual services on the Sabbath and the week-day, and he kept up the private duties of his ministry, besides assisting other ministers in services, particularly at communions. He preached at many places to help fill some of the requests for sermon that were being made to the Associate Presbytery. He also preached on several occasions of public covenanting. When the Associate Synod was formed in 1745, he delivered the opening sermon.

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1. As quoted by Ibid., p. 235.

2. McEwen, op. cit., p. 107.

In 1739, correspondence was begun between the Erskines and Whitefield, and Whitefield spoke of Ralph as "a field preacher of the Scots Church, a noble soldier of Jesus Christ, a burning and shining light who had appeared in the midnight of the Church."<sup>1</sup> There was much mutual respect, encouragement, and prayer for one another. It was proposed that Whitefield make a visit to Scotland, and Ralph wrote to him as to the manner in which he should exercise his ministry, indicating that the Associate Presbytery felt it would be best if he joined wholly with them. In reply to Ebenezer Erskine regarding this wish, Whitefield said that he could not agree to do this, for he was coming as a preacher to any who would hear him.

On July 30, 1741, Whitefield arrived in Dunfermline, and the next day he preached for Ralph Erskine. Then the two of them went into Edinburgh, where Whitefield preached at Orphan-house Park and Canongate Church. On August 5th, Whitefield met with the Associate Presbytery at Dunfermline. Various accounts of this meeting have been given out, and Whitefield's own account is probably the best known.

According to him,<sup>2</sup> the discussion took place on church government and the covenants. Whitefield said that he was not interested in these but only in preaching. Ralph Erskine said that he should be given time to become better acquainted with these subjects since he had been reared in England and was not

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1. Ibid., p. 111.

2. Butler, John Wesley and George Whitefield in Scotland, pp. 22-24.

familiar with them. But others, not so charitable, argued that Whitefield should certainly have correct views on church government since every pin in the tabernacle was important. When Whitefield asked them what they wanted him to do, they replied that it was not desired that he subscribe to the covenants immediately, but only to preach for them until he had further light. Whitefield asked, Why only for them? Ralph Erskine answered, They were the Lord's people. Then Whitefield said that if others were the devil's people, he had more need to go to them. And the meeting was adjourned.

This account puts Ralph Erskine <sup>n</sup> in a bad light due to his statement in reply to Whitefield. But it seems certain that Whitefield has confused names and attributed to Erskine what was said by someone else. For on the following Sunday Erskine condemned an opinion "which he had heard one lately express," that "none have Christ's image who have not just our image."<sup>1</sup> Also, Ralph Erskine in a letter to Whitefield some ten days later says,

Your refusing a close communing on this head seemed to me so far unlike the disposition which our former correspondence made me think you was of, that I was willing to ascribe it rather to the hurry of temptation for the time, amidst the ringing of bells for sermon, and some rash words uttered in your hearing, than to any contrary bias that now you have got.<sup>2</sup>

He goes on to express anxiety lest in the parish manses Whitefield might gain a wrong impression of the Secession so as to be lost to them. And he congratulates him on the welcome he is

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1. MacEwen, op. cit., p. 120.

2. Ibid., p. 120.

receiving and on the liberality shown towards his orphan scheme.

But, as Whitefield continued to associate himself with the ministers of the Established Church, the break with the Associate Presbytery was soon complete, and they each condemned the other. Even Ralph Erskine joined in denouncing Whitefield. In his Faith no Fancy and Fraud and Falsehood Discovered he condemned the Cambuslang Revival with all its emotional features as the devil's work and Whitefield as the devil's agent. Thus relations were severed and feelings were high for the time, but Whitefield could still record in his Journal in 1751: "I have met and shaken hands with Mr. Ralph Erskine. Oh when will God's people learn war no more!"<sup>1</sup>

After the Rebellion of 1745 there came the controversy over the Burgher Oath, which was more heart-breaking and bitter than any previous dispute. Both the Erskines stood by the right to take the oath, for they felt that the Anti-Burgher position would lead to the abandonment of civic and political duty. Ralph, particularly, defended his position and wrote a greater number of pamphlets than any other member of the Burgher Synod. What made it especially heart-breaking for Ralph was the fact that one of his own sons took the opposite side and even participated in the procedure by which Ralph and the other members of the Burgher Synod were deposed and excommunicated.

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1. Ibid., p. 124.

In the years following the controversy the Burgher Synod re-defined its position in a Revised Testimony, the practice of covenanting was gradually dropped, and friendly relations were resumed with evangelical ministers in the Established Church. When Willison, of Dundee, was dying, Ralph Erskine was with him. A lady tried to revive the old quarrel by saying that there would be no Secession in heaven. Erskine replied, and Willison nodded assent, "Madam, in heaven there will be a complete Secession--from sin and sorrow."<sup>1</sup>

In his last years Erskine helped to prepare an Explication of the Shorter Catechism. He also composed his Scripture Songs in meter. His duties became quite heavy for him, and it was a keen disappointment when his son, James, was sent to Stirling instead of being allowed to come as his assistant. He seems to have suffered from occasional ailments and was troubled with heart disease in his last years.<sup>2</sup> In 1752, he was seized with a nervous fever and after an illness of eight days died on November 6th. He was buried in the church at Dunfermline.

Twice married, he had ten children by his first wife, Margaret Dewar, who died on November 22, 1730. Only five of these children survived her. On February 24, 1732, he married Margaret Simson, and they had four sons, only one of which reached maturity. Three of his sons entered the ministry, but none had the privilege of assisting their father.

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1. Ibid., p. 138.

2. Ibid., pp. 142, 143.



### CHAPTER III

#### John Erskine (1721-1803)

John Erskine was born on June 2, 1721.<sup>1</sup> He was the great-grandson, on his father's side, of Henry, second Lord Cardross, and, on his mother's side, of George, fourth Lord Melville, who was his Majesty's commissioner to the Scottish Parliament in 1690. His grandfather was Lt. Col. John Erskine, of Carnock, one of those who refused to take the oath of allegiance at the Revolution because of religious scruples. He was a regular attendant at the General Assembly from 1704 to 1742, and he went to London, in 1735, as a member of the Assembly's Commission applying for the repeal of the patronage act.

Erskine's father was the Professor of Scots Law at Edinburgh University. He was a distinguished lawyer and the author of the Institutes of the Law of Scotland.

Erskine was educated at Cupar, Fife, and the High School in Edinburgh, and also had the assistance of a private tutor. His religious and meditative disposition manifested itself during his boyhood, when he preferred to shut himself in his room and engage in prayer and Scripture study rather than participate in the games and amusements of those of his own age.

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1. The Scots Magazine, February 1803, Vol. LXV, p. 75. (Wellwood, writing in 1818, in Account of the Life and Writings of John Erskine, p. 13, does not mention this date, but only says, "When he (i.e. Erskine) mentioned his age, in the latter part of his life, he did not seem to think it quite certain whether he was born in 1720, or in 1721. It is most probable, however, and this he was himself inclined to believe, that his birth was in the last of these years.")

In the latter part of 1734, he entered Edinburgh University. At that time he states, "Edinburgh College...abounded with youth of conspicuous talents, and indefatigable application to study; many of whom, afterwards, rose to high eminence in the state, in the army, and in the learned professions, especially in the law department."<sup>1</sup> Among his fellow-students were William Robertson, Alexander Carlyle, and John Home. It was as a student that he began his friendship with Robertson which continued for the remainder of their lives.

Erskine mentions two men at the University to whom he considered himself particularly indebted--Dr. John Stevenson, Professor of Logic, and Sir John Pringle, then Professor of Moral Philosophy.<sup>2</sup> These men encouraged literary activity among their students by their custom of prescribing papers on certain subjects to be written and read during the term. Professor Stevenson later selected the best of these essays to be bound, and among them was one by Erskine. Erskine was an excellent student of the classics, and at the University he developed habits of systematic study that were of great benefit to him in his ministry.

Though he had a strong inclination to proceed to the ministry, it was the wish of his family that he follow his father's profession. Respecting their judgment and desiring to please

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1. Discourses Preached on Several Occasions, Vol. I, p. 265.  
 2. Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 265 ff.

them, he spent a considerable time after the completion of his philosophical education in the study of law.<sup>1</sup> But theology continued to interest him more than any other subject, and along with his legal studies he did much reading in theology. Finally, he reached the decision that in spite of the opposition of his family he would enter this calling, because he "connected with it the most extensive sphere of usefulness to the Church of Christ, and to mankind, which could be given to him; or to which he conceived his peculiar talents to be adapted."<sup>2</sup> Looking back on his choice some years later he says,

If my heart deceived me not, my ends in entering into the ministry were pure and disinterested. I have seen no cause to repent my choice of a profession.... But I lament, that I entered on the sacred function, ere I had spent one fourth of the time, in reading, in meditation, and in devotional exercises, which would have been necessary, in any tolerable degree, to qualify me for it.<sup>3</sup>

In 1741, he gave proof of the extent of his theological studies when he wrote and had published a pamphlet, The Law of Nature, sufficiently promulgated to the Heathen World, in answer to the book by Campbell, of St. Andrews, which the Assembly of 1736 had condemned as containing some dangerous statements. The doctrine that Erskine particularly questioned was Campbell's assertion that man is unable by reason alone, without supernatural revelation, to discover the being and perfections of God and the immortality of human souls.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Wellwood, op. cit., pp. 26, 27.

2. Ibid., p. 397.

3. Discourses, Vol. I, p. 136.

4. Theological Dissertations, p. 230.

Erskine, on the other hand, affirmed that man was quite capable of learning these things about God by means of his natural faculties, for "God has afforded the heathen world such advantages for the discovering and receiving these truths, that their ignorance or disbelief of them could be owing to nothing but their own negligence or perverseness."<sup>1</sup>

Among the many authors of ancient and contemporary books that he quoted was Dr. Warburton, afterwards Bishop of Gloucester, whose views on the subject were very similar. Erskine sent him a copy of the pamphlet, and this occasioned a correspondence on various theological subjects that lasted until the Bishop's death.

On August 16, 1743, Erskine received his license to preach from the Presbytery of Dunblane. His first public sermon was at the parish church of Torrieburn on the text, Psalm 84:10.<sup>2</sup> It was the desire of the Presbytery that he go to Tulliallan, of which his father was the patron, but he was opposed to this and chose instead to accept the parish of Kirkintilloch, near Glasgow. He was inducted to this charge on May 31, 1744. He entered immediately into his pastoral duties and soon won his way into the hearts of his people. He also had many close friends among the clergy in Glasgow, particularly John Gillies, John MacLaurin, William Leechman, and John Hamilton.

In 1748, George Whitefield preached for Erskine at Kirk-

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1. *Ibid.*, pp. 230, 231.

2. *Wellwood, op. cit.*, p. 65.

intilloch and for Dr. Gillies at Glasgow. From the very beginning Erskine had been zealous to defend Whitefield and his work. He felt that Whitefield had done considerable service to the interests of religion in Scotland, and although recognizing that Whitefield was a Methodist, he refused to admit that his Methodism was only emotionalism or so-called 'enthusiasm.'<sup>1</sup> Those in the Established Church had previously done very little to agitate against Whitefield officially, but in 1748, at the Synod of Glasgow, the subject of Established Church ministers employing him was introduced. A motion was made regarding the employment of ministers of "doubtful character," directed against Whitefield, but this was not approved. A more moderate motion was finally passed that made each minister responsible to his presbytery for those whom he employed. Erskine took an active part in the debate and later published an account of it.

At Kirkintilloch he began his voluminous correspondence with persons on the Continent, in the colonies, and at home. He had occasion to write several ministers on the Continent, particularly in Holland, in connection with a pamphlet he published advocating the more frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper. At about the same time he commenced a correspondence with Jonathan Edwards in America, and soon he was writing to some ten other ministers in the colonies. He was chiefly interested in learning from them the state of religion in North

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1. Ibid., p. 105.

America and the circumstances that influenced its progress.<sup>1</sup> At home he began to interchange views on public, literary, and theological questions with such well-known men as Lord Kames, Sir David Dalrymple (afterwards Lord Hailes), Bishop Hurd, and Edmund Burke. With a truly catholic spirit he desired by this exchange of letters and books to keep himself abreast of events and opinions influencing the welfare of the church in every land.

His correspondence consumed much time, and in addition, he was occasionally called upon by friends of deceased ministers to correct and superintend the publication of posthumous works. "To his voluntary labours in this way, the religious world is indebted for a greater part of the works of President Edwards, and Dickson, and of Stoddart, and Fraser of Alness."<sup>2</sup>

In February 1753, he moved to the first charge at Culross, where, with a colleague's assistance, he had more leisure and better opportunity for literary activity, though he had to forego the pleasures of Glasgow society and the use of its libraries. Here he devoted himself more fully to the study of the Hebrew language.

After five years at Culross he was translated to New Greyfriars, one of the single charges in Edinburgh. On July 9, 1767, he was inducted to the second charge at Old Grey-

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1. Ibid., p. 159.

2. Chambers, A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen, Vol. II, p. 270.

friars, where he began his association with Dr. Robertson that lasted for twenty-six years.

In every charge he had the esteem and affection of his parishioners. He possessed a native simplicity and good humor, a cheerful and amusing conversation, and kind and affectionate manners, which made him welcome in their homes.<sup>1</sup> He was careful and untiring in his many pastoral duties, and he "grudged no time, and declined no labour," spent in the service of his people.<sup>2</sup> He was a familiar figure in Edinburgh society and was actively interested in organizations like the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, which contributed to education and the spread of the Christian faith. In all his activities he "was universally understood to be guided by the purest motives, and never, on any occasion, to be swayed by private or personal considerations."<sup>3</sup> "A saying of his own...was the maxim that governed his conduct--'Action is the rest of the soul.'"<sup>4</sup> It was only due to the fact that he carefully scheduled his activities that no time was wasted and the extent of his services was so great.

He was widely noted for his preaching though he made no commanding appearance in the pulpit. Somerville considered him the most "practical and useful preacher" he had ever heard.<sup>5</sup> In Guy Mannering Sir Walter Scott has best described Erskine as a preacher:

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1. Wellwood, op. cit., p. 239; Chambers, op. cit., p. 272.
  2. Kay, A Series of Original Portraits and Caricature Etchings, p. 172.
  3. Wellwood, op. cit., p. 390.
  4. The Scots Magazine, February 1803, Vol. LXV, p. 82.
  5. Mathieson, The Awakening of Scotland, p. 230.

The colleague of Dr. Robertson ascended the pulpit. His external appearance was not prepossessing. A remarkably fair complexion, strangely contrasted with a black wig without a grain of powder; a narrow chest and a stooping posture; hands which, placed like props on either side of the pulpit, seemed necessary rather to support the person than to assist the gesticulation of the preacher; no gown, not even that of Geneva, a tumbled band, and a gesture which seemed scarce voluntary, --were the first circumstances which struck a stranger. 'The preacher seems a very ungainly person,' whispered Mannering to his new friend.

'Never fear; he's the son of an excellent Scottish lawyer,--he'll show blood, I'll warrant him.'

The learned counsellor predicted truly. A lecture was delivered, fraught with new, striking, and entertaining views of Scripture history; a sermon, in which the Calvinism of the Kirk of Scotland was ably supported, yet made the basis of a sound system of practical morals, which should neither shelter the sinner under the cloak of speculative faith or of peculiarity of opinion, nor leave him loose to the waves of unbelief and schism. Something there was of an antiquated turn of argument and metaphor, but it only served to give zest and peculiarity to the style of elocution. The sermon was not read; a scrap of paper containing the heads of the discourse was occasionally referred to, and the enunciation, which at first seemed imperfect and embarrassed, became, as the preacher warmed in his progress, animated and distinct; and although the discourse could not be quoted as a correct specimen of pulpit eloquence, yet Mannering had seldom heard so much learning, metaphysical acuteness, and energy of argument brought into the service of Christianity.

With the exception of French, Erskine was ignorant of foreign languages, and this was a source of continual regret in his later years. At the age of sixty he determined to learn German and Dutch. He soon acquired such a knowledge of them that he was able without assistance to follow the trend of thought in books of those languages. Having accomplished this task, he used this new capability in publishing two volumes



entitled Sketches and Hints of Church History and Theological Controversy. In the preface of the first volume he says, "The chief design of the following sheets, is to impart to others, the entertainment and instruction which I have received from Foreign Writers, as to the history of the earliest ages of Christianity, and the present state of religion and theological controversy."<sup>1</sup> The sketches are chiefly translations or abridgments of Dutch and German books, with some few from Latin and French publications. The rest are from English works.

He was very active in the church courts and was seldom absent from a presbytery or synod meeting, and never from a General Assembly of which he was a member. He and his colleague, Dr. Robertson, were leaders of opposite parties in the Assembly, but they never allowed their differences to degenerate into personal spite or animosity. Erskine was a member of the Evangelical party and was an ardent defender of the rights of the people to have a part in the selection of their minister.<sup>2</sup> On subjects of general importance his arguments were clear and forcible, though his manner of public speaking had some disadvantages of manner.<sup>3</sup> His legal training was a great advantage to his cause in cases where points of ecclesiastical law or precedent were involved.

Although he was a close friend of Whitefield, he never showed the same friendship for John Wesley. In 1765, some

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1. p. iii.

2. He was an intimate friend of Thomas Gillespie, the founder of the Relief Presbytery.

3. Wellwood, op. cit., p. 385.

letters that Wesley had written were printed in Scotland under the title, Aspasio Vindicated, with a preface by John Erskine. In the preface Erskine attempted to disclose the motives, methods, and teachings of Wesley. He accused Wesley of deliberately concealing the truth from his adherents in Scotland by advising his preachers there to avoid preaching those doctrines which might arouse Scottish antagonism.<sup>1</sup> He goes on to say that the leader of Methodism "has blended with some precious Gospel truths a medley of Arminian, Antinomian, and enthusiastic errors.... Damnable heresies, superstitious rites, and the wildest fanaticism may gradually gain ground; and opinions and practices take place the mention of which would shock many, it is hoped the greatest part of people in this country, at present attached to Methodism."<sup>2</sup> He particularly disapproved of Wesley's views on predestination, perseverance, and sanctification.

One of Wesley's itinerant preachers attempted to make a reply in an Earnest Appeal, but Erskine made this the occasion for a new publication in defense of his preface. In it he discussed Wesley's doctrinal errors more fully. So it was largely due to Erskine's writings and influence that the progress of Methodism for some time was so slow. Swift has said that Methodism "received a blow which might well have proved mortal; as it was, its development was retarded for twenty years."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Swift, Methodism in Scotland, p. 27.

2. As quoted by Butler, op. cit., p. 152.

3. op. cit., p. 25.

In 1764, Erskine published a volume of Theological Dissertations, containing five treatises, the first three of which had never before been published. The last two were his essays against Campbell and his attempt to promote the more frequent dispensing of communion. His first dissertation was on "The Nature of the Sinai Covenant" and his second was on "The Character and Privileges of the Christian Church." The third was perhaps his most important, "The Nature of Christian Faith." In this he laid stress on the working of our intellectual nature as the basic element in saving faith. "Faith...in the scripture," he said, "does not signify choice, affection, temper, or behaviour; for, in common language, it does not signify these, but merely persuasion or assent; and commonly a persuasion founded on testimony."<sup>1</sup>

By 1769, Erskine's opinions on the questions in debate between Britain and America had formed to the extent that he issued a pamphlet entitled Shall I go to war with my American Brethren? In this he stated what would be the effects on both sides should war break out, and he suggested the principles that should be used in solving the differences. The pamphlet was re-issued after the outbreak of war, and in the preface he pleaded for measures of conciliation to prevent the final separation of the colonies.

He was stirred, in 1778, when the restrictions on Roman

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1. p. 158.

Catholics in Scotland were in danger of being relaxed. "If there was a subject in the state of the world, which affected Dr. Erskine's mind more deeply than another, it arose from his apprehension of the progress of Popery in Protestant states, and of the perpetual industry of Catholic priests in promoting it."<sup>1</sup> He was zealous in condemning the proposed bill and issued a pamphlet in which he declared that its passage at that time was most inexpedient. It was on this occasion that he corresponded with Edmund Burke, sending him a number of papers and sermons, which contained the prevalent Scottish ideas regarding the measure. During the riots that occurred in Edinburgh at the time, a mob gathered to demolish the house of Dr. Robertson, who was in favor of the bill, and it was only through the presence and intervention of Erskine that the house was spared and the mob dispersed.

Erskine occupies a position as one of the leading advocates of foreign missions in the Church of Scotland. In 1796, the Synod of Fife and Moray overtured the Assembly in favor of a mission to the heathen. The motion was vigorously opposed. Then Erskine arose and pointed to a Bible which lay on the table. "Moderator, rax me that Bible," he said. He presented a serious plea for foreign missions based on Biblical teachings, but the proposal was defeated.<sup>2</sup>

On November 28, 1766, he received the Doctor of Divinity

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1. Wellwood, op. cit., p. 283.

2. Scott, Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae, Vol. I, p. 47.

degree from Glasgow University. In the minutes of the faculty that conferred it there is a statement commending his "undoubted probity, ingenuity, and learning."<sup>1</sup> In 1793, he had the offer of an appointment to be one of his Majesty's chaplains in Scotland, but he refused to accept it.

His health began to decline before the death of Dr. Robertson, in 1793, but he continued to officiate for some years, though his voice gradually became so weak that it could hardly be heard. His last public sermon, on "Infant Baptism," was preached sixteen months before his death. His intellectual faculties were strong to the end, and on the night of his death he was occupied in reading a new Dutch book. He passed away at his home on Lauriston Lane in the early morning of January 19, 1803.

Before his death Erskine had written some twenty-five books and pamphlets, besides the large number which he edited. Early in his life he had acquired the ability of writing shorthand. However, he "never wrote well; and his short-hand was most particularly defective, even to those who understood the characters."<sup>2</sup> As a result, many of his manuscripts became a total loss.

He was married on June 15, 1746, to the Honorable Christian Mackay, daughter of George, third Lord Reay. They had fourteen children, only four of whom survived their father. Mrs. Erskine lived some five years after her husband.

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1. As quoted by Wellwood, op. cit., p. 241.

2. Wellwood, op. cit., pp. 17, 18.

In the notice of his death The Scots Magazine said this of John Erskine, "During his long and useful life, he was universally esteemed as a Christian, a clergyman, an orthodox preacher, a scholar, and a gentleman."<sup>1</sup>

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1. January 1803, Vol. LXV, p. 72.

## CHAPTER IV

### Hugh Blair (1718-1800)

"The famous Dr. Blair" was born in Edinburgh on April 7, 1718. His father, after having lost money in speculation on the Darien Scheme, was employed in the Excise where he received a comfortable income. His grandfather, Hugh Blair, was a Merchant Burgess of Edinburgh and held the position of Dean of Guild. His great-grandfather, Robert Blair, was minister at St. Andrews, professor at the University of Glasgow, chaplain to Charles I, Moderator of the General Assembly in 1646, and a covenanting preacher.

Blair gave early evidence of a studious disposition, and his family determined that he should be educated for the ministry. After some preliminary instruction at home, Blair went through the regular course at the High School, and in the autumn of 1730, he entered Edinburgh University. At this period the University was undergoing reorganization, changing over from the system where a regent taught all the courses to that under which a professor confined himself to one subject and concerned himself little with the mechanics of graduation.<sup>1</sup> This helps to explain why such an excellent student as Blair should spend nine years in working for a degree which was

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1. Schmitz, Hugh Blair, p. 10.

formerly obtained in four.

He studied, and first distinguished himself, under Professor Stevenson in Logic. In the spring of 1734, he wrote an essay, On the Beautiful, which Stevenson ordered to be read publicly at the end of the term, as an acknowledgment of its merits. This was a great spur to Blair's literary interests.

He was a most methodical student, and in his years at the University he began to make elaborate summaries of the books that he read. With several others he also commenced the formation of long chronological tables in which every important historical occurrence in the past found its place.

In 1739, Blair and four other students requested the Senatus that they be awarded their degrees. The public trials were held, and on February 23rd, he received his Master of Arts degree. After his graduation he retained some sort of a connection with the University for three more years.<sup>1</sup> During this time he was no doubt completing his theological studies, begun several years earlier, and we find him also acting as tutor to Simon Fraser, eldest son of Lord Lovat.

On October 21, 1741, he was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Edinburgh, and the following May he received a call to Collessie in Fife, where he was ordained on September 23, 1742. His dissatisfaction with this rural pastorate is evidenced by the fact that five months later he was engaged

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1. Ibid., p. 16.



in a contest for the second charge at the Canongate Church, Edinburgh.

This second charge was filled by a majority vote of the magistrates, Kirk Session, heritors, and deacons,<sup>1</sup> and was the occasion sometimes of much wire-pulling. With the help of his friends Blair was able to obtain one hundred and thirty-six out of the two hundred and eighteen votes, and so he was translated, on July 14, 1743, to his new charge, where he remained for eleven years.

He began to distinguish himself as a preacher almost at once, and the ladies and gentlemen of fashion were soon thronging the church. After barely a year, he was selected by the General Assembly to serve on a committee preparing Biblical paraphrases for use in public worship.<sup>2</sup> In 1746, he was elected Moderator of the Presbytery of Edinburgh and a member of the Assembly, and he preached the opening sermon for the latter. On January 1, 1750, he was asked to preach the fiftieth anniversary sermon of the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge.

Blair agreed with the Moderates in both their principles and policy, and he gave active backing to the measures that the party adopted in the Assembly, though most of his work was done behind the scenes.

The Moderates were anxious to display their cultural at-

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1. Ibid., p. 18.

2. He had a hand in at least nine of the sixty-seven paraphrases as they were finally published in 1781.

tainments and resorted to many fields of activity outside the realm of church matters. Among these were poetry, drama, history, philosophy, and mathematics.

Blair's interest in literary pursuits began early in life, and during his pastorate in the Canongate he was busy cultivating the leading men of letters in Edinburgh. He soon established himself as an intimate acquaintance of men like David Hume, William Robertson, Adam Ferguson, John Home, Alexander Carlyle, Alexander Wedderburn, John Jardine, and Henry Home. In 1753, he edited an eight volume Scots edition of the Works of Shakespeare and a collection of the sermons of Frederick Carmichael, minister of New Greyfriars. From this time on "it became more and more difficult to distinguish the minister from the man of letters. In some ways Blair's literary life was beginning to overshadow his ministerial duties, though it should not be forgotten that the ministry was his chief concern."<sup>1</sup>

On April 19, 1748, he married his cousin, Katherine Bannattine, and the following year they had a daughter, Katherine. They had only one other child, a son, who died in infancy.

Blair was admitted to Lady Yester's Church on October 11, 1754. His literary interests consumed much of his time there and extended far beyond the church. For instance, he took an active interest in several societies that were intended to promote culture in Scotland, he contributed to the Edinburgh

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1. Schmitz, op. cit., p. 24.

Review of 1755, and he was kept busy in a literary defense of his friends, David Hume and Lord Kames.

As for his participation in the cultural societies of Edinburgh, he was a charter member of the Select Society, founded in 1754, which included all the men of letters in Edinburgh and its neighborhood, and many of the nobility and gentry. Subjects of every kind except two--revealed religion and Jacobite politics--could be introduced, and the night would be spent in discussing them.<sup>1</sup> When this society was disbanded because of a futile attempt to make its members speak correct English, Blair was a member of two of its off-shoots--the St. Giles' Society and the Belles Lettres Society. In 1762, the Poker Club was formed to 'poke up' the militia question. But in this, as in the other societies, Blair remained in the background and rarely voiced his opinion. When the Royal Society of Edinburgh was founded, in 1783, he was among its charter members.

Blair was of the opinion that "a little fluctuation now and then to the sceptical side, tends perhaps to humble the pride of understanding, and to check bigotry."<sup>2</sup> He might suggest such in private, but in public it was a different matter. In 1755, when Hume and Kames were brought to the attention of the Assembly, because of their writings, the Moderates prepared to defend them, though they, too, condemned their heretical opinions. While Robertson handled matters in the

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1. Ibid., p. 25.

2. "Letter to James Beattie," as quoted by Ibid., p. 30.

Assembly, Blair wrote a pamphlet in which he advised the Assembly to attend to its own work and not concern itself with matters involving the freedom of intellectual inquiry.<sup>1</sup> The next year the Moderates were able to prevent their trials for heresy from taking place.

In 1757, Blair was honored by the University of St. Andrews, with the Doctor of Divinity degree. It was given in absentia, and the minutes of the University record nothing more than that the degree was awarded.<sup>2</sup>

The Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale refused to approve Blair's translation to the High Church of St. Giles, and it was only by an appeal to the Assembly that this change was effected, on June 15, 1758. Alexander Carlyle records that it was on the subject of his translation that Blair made his first and only speech in the Assembly.<sup>3</sup>

Except for his preaching, Blair's ministerial duties were crowded out by his literary activities. As one of the select men of letters in Edinburgh, he began to think of himself as one whose duty it was to encourage younger men.<sup>4</sup> In 1759, Home showed him some fragments of Gaelic poetry in English translation, presumably of the third century, which had been given him by James Macpherson, a young tutor of Highland origins. Blair showed immediate interest, and in a meeting with Macpherson urged him to collect and translate any other pieces

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1. Schmitz, op. cit., p. 32.

2. Ibid., p. 37.

3. Autobiography, p. 395.

4. Schmitz, op. cit., p. 42.

that he could find. Meanwhile, the poems that had first been given him were put into circulation and became a sensation. The following year Macpherson returned with fifteen pieces, which Blair prepared for the press under the title, Fragments of Ancient Poetry. With financial backing, Macpherson was then sent to search out the supposedly lost poem of Fingal, written by Ossian, and it was published in 1761. Two years later, in a new edition of all the poems, Blair included as a preface, A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian. Blair soon became an international figure, as the poems and preface made their way into France and Germany. In Britain they were well received, but many had doubts as to their authenticity, and when Blair went to London, in 1763, he found that the most noted literary figures were against receiving them as genuine. Hume suggested that Blair make an investigation, and from the little factual information that he obtained, he remained convinced that they were genuine translations. He even enlarged his Critical Dissertation and included the results of his investigation.

While he was gaining an international reputation for his promotion and defense of Ossian, he was also increasing his local reputation. In 1759, he began to read lectures upon composition at the University. These lectures were so well received that the Town Council appointed him Professor of Rhetoric the following year. In 1762, he was nominated

by Royal Commission as Regius Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, and he lectured to an ever increasing number of students. These lectures included a discussion on the nature of taste and the sources of its pleasures, the consideration of language, style, eloquence or public speaking, and a critical examination of certain outstanding works of composition. On sermonizing, he comments, "It is the union of these two kinds of composition, of the French earnestness and warmth, with the English accuracy and reason, that would form, according to my idea, the model of a perfect Sermon."<sup>1</sup>

During this period of his life he was engaged in a great number of minor activities. He was consulted by a number of authors for advice and assistance, among them Thomas Reid, on his Inquiry into the Human Mind, Adam Ferguson, on his Essay on Civil Society, and Henry Mackenzie, on Prince of Tunis. He also began writing the speeches for the Earl of Glasgow, who was Lord High Commissioner to the Assembly. He supervised, in 1772, the publication of an anthology, The British Poets. He was active in entertaining Benjamin Franklin and Dr. Samuel Johnson, on their visits to Edinburgh. In 1768, with Dr. Robertson, he made a second visit to London.

Carlyle, in describing Robertson and Blair, says, "Robertson was sagacious, Blair was most naïf. Neither of them could be said to have either wit or humour."<sup>2</sup> He goes on, "Blair

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1. Lectures, Vol. II, p. 298.

2. op. cit., p. 305.

was timid and unambitious, and withheld himself from public business of every kind, and seemed to have no wish but to be admired as a preacher, particularly by the ladies. His conversation was so infantine that many people thought it impossible, at first sight, that he could be a man of sense or genius."<sup>1</sup>

Blair was widely noted for his vanity. He was precise and fastidious in his dress. There was a correctness in his wig amounting to a hair-breadth exactness.<sup>2</sup> People also commented on the "self-satisfied and finical air" with which he walked to church on Sunday morning.<sup>3</sup>

His congregation at St. Giles' included the most fashionable and prominent people in the city. A precentor was even brought from York Cathedral in the hopes of improving the quality of the music and of adding more dignity to the service. All listened closely "as the great preacher read closely from the pulpit cushion his well-rounded, sonorous sentences,"<sup>4</sup> remarking afterwards what a wonderful sermon had just been delivered. Blair's colleague at this time, Robert Walker, was of a very different type, an evangelical who preached Calvinism and denounced worldly dissipation. To his preaching came the poorer classes. In point of numbers his congregation was larger than that which heard Blair. But when it came to the collection, one elder remarked that it took twenty-four of

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1. Ibid., pp. 305, 306.

2. Kay, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 123.

3. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 123.

4. Graham, Scottish Men of Letters in the Eighteenth Century, p. 124.

Mr. Walker's hearers to equal one of Mr. Blair's.<sup>1</sup>

In 1769, his daughter died, and her death was such a blow that for a while he retired from his ministerial duties and social engagements. But the next year he adopted Elizabeth Hunter, eight year old daughter of a deceased minister. He suffered two more losses when Hume died in 1776, and Lord Kames passed away six years later. He fell victim to the gout and began to think of retiring from some of his activities. In 1783, he gave up his teaching and published his lectures.

Though he retired from teaching, he still remained, technically, joint professor, and he enjoyed the title and salary. He continued to hold his high reputation and position and was often resorted to by rising poets, playwrights, and historians. When Burns came to Edinburgh in 1786, Blair was among the most prominent of his patrons and made certain suggestions regarding the second edition of Burns' poems that the poet saw fit to take. Later Burns recorded his impressions of Blair:

It is not easy forming an exact judgment of any one, but in my opinion Dr. Blair is merely an astonishing proof of what industry and application can do. Natural parts like his are frequently to be met with; his vanity is proverbially known among his acquaintances; but he is justly at the head of what may be called fine writing; and a critic of the first, the very first rank in Prose; even in Poesy a good Bard of Nature's making can only take the pas of him. He has a heart not of the finest water, but far from being an ordinary one. In short, he is truly (a) worthy and most respectable character.

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1. Ibid., p. 123.

2. As quoted by Schmitz, op. cit., p. 121.



Considering his position, he naturally thought that he would succeed Dr. Robertson as Principal of the University, though he made no efforts towards that end. Much to his surprise and to that of all Edinburgh, the appointment went to George Baird, thirty-two year old Professor of Oriental Languages. He was peeved at first at not receiving it, but since he still remained very influential, this feeling soon passed. Carlyle writes that "though he was huffed at not having an offer of the Principality, he is happy in being resorted to as the head of the University."<sup>1</sup>

He began to publish his sermons in 1777. His publisher, William Strahan, after having glanced at the first few, was about to refuse them, but sent them to Dr. Johnson for his opinion. Johnson replied, "I have read over Dr. Blair's first sermon with more than approbation; to say it is good, is to say too little."<sup>2</sup> They were published. In six months the volume had been through a fourth printing. Blair was ready with a second volume in 1780, and two others came out before his death, at which time he was preparing a fifth. After the second volume was published, the Earl of Mansfield read some selections from it to the King and Queen, who admired them so much that a pension of £200 was settled upon Blair. The third volume is dedicated to the Queen. Before Blair's death Volume I had been through twenty-one printings,

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1. op. cit., p. 576.

2. Schmitz, op. cit., p. 82.

Volume II through eighteen, Volume III through ten, and Volume IV through six. He lived to see them translated into French, German, and Dutch.

Blair had neither a good voice nor an easy manner, and yet, strangely enough, he had a great reputation as a preacher. The men who knew him well made derogatory remarks about his manner. Adam Smith said that it was "puffed up"; Thomas Somerville said that it was "stiff, formal, and not altogether free from affectation"; Boswell was disgusted with his "burring pronunciation, and drawling manner in the Lothian tone."<sup>1</sup> But his acquaintances also praised his preaching. Kames said that Blair was the "best preacher in Britain," likely to ruin himself only by "making every sermon as good as any other."<sup>2</sup> Boswell said that Blair would "stop hounds by his eloquence."<sup>3</sup> He and many others, among them George III and Dr. Johnson, were agreed that Blair's sermons "lighted things up so finely, and you get from them such comfortable answers."<sup>4</sup>

His sermons were carefully composed. He took a week over one, according to Boswell in Tour to the Hebrides. His colleague at the time of his death, James Finlayson, says this of Blair's preaching,

You may have heard others who equalled, or even excelled him in some of the requisites of pulpit oratory, in occasional profoundness of thought, in vivid flashes of imagination, or in pathetic addresses to

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1. As quoted by Schmitz, op. cit., p. 39.

2. Ibid., p. 39.

3. Ibid., p. 1.

4. Ibid., p. 1.

the heart. But there never was a public teacher in whom all these requisites were combined in juster proportions, placed under the direction of a more exquisite sense of propriety, and employed with more uniform success to convey useful and practical instruction.<sup>1</sup>

After the death of his wife, on February 9, 1795, Blair led a more retired life. He stopped his regular preaching and preached only once more, on May 20, 1796, at the Tron Church, for the Society for the Benefit of the Sons of the Clergy.

He died on December 27, 1800, and was buried in Greyfriars' churchyard.

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1. "A Short Account of the Life and Character of Dr. Hugh Blair," Blair, Sermons, Vol. I, pp. xxviii, xxix.

B. The Sermons

## CHAPTER V

### Their Homiletics

"Leslie Stephens, writing of the eighteenth century, remarks that in those days there were three, and only three, classes of sermons--those that were dull, and those that were duller, and those that were inconceivably dull!"<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps one reason for such a criticism is the fact that Scottish theological education has tended to relegate practical training to a minor position, and this was true to an even greater degree in the eighteenth century than at the present time. In the first half of that century much attention was given to theology and Biblical studies, but the 'science' of homiletics was practically unknown. There were no textbooks on the subject. Neither was there any formal instruction in the art of preaching. Still, a man was not left entirely to his own genius in the matter, for there were sources from which assistance was supplied, though these, unfortunately, taught more what had been done than what should be done. Among these sources were printed sermons, general education, and preaching itself.

There were a number of sermons in print by both older and contemporary ministers, which helped to serve in the place of

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1. Gossip, "An Appreciation," in Macgregor, The Making of a Preacher, p. 12.

textbooks for students and young preachers. Of these might be mentioned Rollock's Sermons, which Ralph Erskine is noted as having read. Much could be learned from such as to the method of handling a text. This was also true in listening to sermons. Of particular help in the field of homiletics was a man's general education, which involved the study of grammar and rhetoric. Style was certainly influenced in this way. But the greatest factor in the fashioning of a preacher was undoubtedly preaching itself. One of the purposes of a period of trial before ordination was to provide a time of development and progress in the art of preaching.

But even such assistance as these supplied was not of benefit to all, for one, writing of preaching in the middle of the century, says, "It was not uncommon for the Scottish clergy to value themselves upon the length, the loudness, the extemporaneous effusion, the mingled mysticism and vulgarity, and the canting recitation of their sermons."<sup>1</sup>

While the three ministers whom we are considering were mostly trained in the first fifty years of the century, it should be mentioned that in the last fifty years, as the influences of the new movement in literature began to be diffused throughout the country, more interest was focused on homiletics, though indirectly. As it became the desire to write, so it became the desire to preach, in good style and proper form, and

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1. The Scots Magazine, Vol. LXIII, p. 4.

in this respect preaching was influenced. This was very true in Moderate circles, and Hugh Blair was among those responsible for the new emphasis, as students attended his lectures and as his own published sermons gained a wide circulation. Even Evangelicals were affected, for their sermons attained a more elegant style and were purged of their more glaring grammatical mistakes.

In the eighteenth century people were inclined to judge the value of a discourse more on its content and style than on the manner in which it was delivered. Voice and gestures were secondary to what was said. This is illustrated by the fact that all three men of this study had widespread popularity and yet were not particularly impressive in their appearance in the pulpit. Of the three, perhaps Ralph Erskine made the greatest appeal through a better voice, though he, like Hugh Blair, read his sermons. From the accounts supplied of John Erskine and Hugh Blair, their voices and manner were subject to much improvement. And the gestures of all three were somewhat stereotyped.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the outstanding homiletical features of the sermons of these three preachers, and the emphasis will be on construction and composition. First, however, we are to consider the texts and subjects which they used. It is unfortunate, in drawing a comparison between their sermons, that we have no one text on which all preached, though there are a number which were used by two of them.

## TEXTS

The first essential of an eighteenth century Scottish sermon was a text. The custom of selecting a portion of the Scriptures to be used as the basis for a sermon was not peculiar to Scotland, but it could nowhere have been more completely and consistently observed. God had spoken in the Bible, and the preacher's task was to interpret and expound what God had said.

Every sermon that these three men preached has at least one text, and Ralph Erskine has two sermons with two texts each.<sup>1</sup> Most of the Scripture passages that they selected are only one, or part of one, verse. The longest is Isaiah 24:1-5, which John Erskine used for his sermon, "The Sources and Consequences of Anarchy." Blair uses four verses for one sermon<sup>2</sup> and three for another.<sup>3</sup> All of them have several sermons based on two verses. For ordinary Sunday services a short text was no doubt customary, due to the fact that in the lecture preceding the sermon a long passage of Scripture was ordinarily expounded.

Sometimes frequent use was made of a particular text. It was the habit with many ministers to deal as exhaustively as possible with a passage in order to present its full meaning and varied teachings. Such exhaustive treatment would take the form either of one long sermon extended for several Sabbaths

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1. "The Combination and Conjunction of Joys," Vol. VI, and "Redemption by Christ," Vol. VIII.

2. "On the Love of our Country, Vol. V.

3. "On the Benefits to be Derived from the House of Mourning," Vol. II.



or a different approach to the text in each of a series of sermons. By the end of the century the practice was gradually dying out, and a difference is noticeable in this respect between Ralph Erskine and the other two. For instance, Ralph has fourteen sermons on "Prayer" from the text, Romans 12:12; thirteen sermons entitled "Gospel-Principle, the Foundation of Gospel-Practice," on Colossians 2:6; nine sermons entitled "Self-Conceit Incident to a Multitude of Professors," on Proverbs 30:12; and eight sermons entitled "The Happy Congregation," on Genesis 49:10. Most of the sermons in each series are sections of one long discourse and were usually delivered within the space of several months, though often at different places.

John Erskine has a series of five sermons, each on a different phrase in the text, 1 Timothy 3:16, but other than this his longest series on a single text is three sermons. Of these there are several, all parts of one discourse.

Hugh Blair is so far removed from extended preaching on a text that there is only one case of even two sermons upon the same verse: "On the Government of the Heart," on Proverbs 4:23.

With regard to the selection of a text for a sermon, we have seen in the case of Ralph Erskine that as he studied he made lists of passages for use at various times--for communion, for fast-days and week-days, for ordinary Sabbaths. A few days before the sermon was to be delivered, he would probably glance over his list and, upon the background of his pastoral work,

make use of the text that struck him as being particularly fitting. That he did this is seen in one sermon where he says, "I have been led, without any design in me, but only as the text was pleasant to my own soul, to speak of the very sum and centre of ecclesiastical government...."<sup>1</sup> No doubt the other two men followed much the same method in selecting texts.

Due to the fact that we have such a proportionately small number of their sermons for any extended period of time, we cannot tell if they had an over-all yearly plan of preaching. We do know that Ralph Erskine occasionally followed some sort of plan for short periods. For instance, he says in one place, "The subjects I have lately discoursed upon, compared with this text, will hold forth to us a fourfold verdict concerning Christ, the glorious Redeemer of an elect world."<sup>2</sup> This seems to be exceptional, however, and the probability is that each of these men preached from particular texts as occasion demanded or as the Spirit moved them.

Because of their popularity and reputation, the special occasions for which they were called upon to preach were numerous. The majority of the published sermons of Ralph Erskine were preached at sacramental seasons, either on the day of preparation before, or as the Action-sermon for communion, or as a sermon of thanksgiving following. The texts chosen for these occasions were usually most appropriate. In his Action-sermons

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1. Vol. VI, p. 116.

2. Vol. I, p. 222. See also Vol. VIII, pp. 133, 361; Vol. IX, p. 242.

he often spoke on the death of Christ and the salvation we have through Him. Such texts as these were used: John 3:35; Rev. 7:17; Gal. 2:20. The sermons following communion usually dealt either with the blessings to be derived from communion, as on Gen. 28:15 and Isaiah 40:31, or with the believer's response in humiliation, so John 4:27, or in thanksgiving, so 1 John 4:19 and Psalm 101:1, or in righteous living, so Col. 2:6.

We have four sermons of Ralph Erskine that were delivered on fast-days appointed by the Associate Presbytery. These discourses emphasize the need for humility and also warn of the judgments of God that are to come upon the wicked. The texts are Jer. 13:16; Hosea 13:9; Ezekiel 16:63; and Isaiah 26:20, 21. There is a sermon at the ordination of John Hunter, the first licentiate of the Presbytery, on Luke 14:23; a sermon on Acts 7:3, at the admission of James Fisher to Cross Hill; one at Stirling on Deut. 26:17, 18, when the Presbytery renewed the National Covenants; one at the first meeting of the Associate Synod at Stirling, on John 2:19.

About one-third of the published sermons of John Erskine were preached on special occasions. Three were funeral sermons on the texts: Hebrews 13:8; 1 Chron. 29:12; and Psalm 88:18. There are two sermons before meetings of Synod on James 3:1 and 2 Cor. 6:3. The others were delivered: at the admission of David Black to Lady Yester's Church, on Isaiah 30:20; before the Governors of Heriot's Hospital, on Rev. 2:9;

before the Society for Promoting Religious Knowledge Among the Poor, on Phil. 2:21; before the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, on Isaiah 55:3; at communion, on John 18:37; before the managers of the Orphan Hospital, on Psalm 144:12; prior to the election of the Magistrates of Edinburgh, on Joshua 1:17; and before the Magistrates, on Isaiah 24:1-5.

Only nine of Hugh Blair's sermons are noted as being preached on special occasions. Five of these were at communion services, on texts that center around Christ and the benefits that are available to the Christian: John 17:1; Hebrews 4:15; Matt. 11:28; 26:29; and Psalm 73:28. His other sermons were preached: at the New Year 1793, on Psalm 31:15; before the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, on Isaiah 11:9; on the occasion of the National Fast in 1793, on Psalm 122:6-9; and before the Society for the Benefit of the Sons of the Clergy, on Jer. 49:11.

Having thus glanced at the texts used for special occasions, let us now observe what portions of the Bible were selected for their sermons as a whole. One fact stands out almost immediately, that in all three instances the passages chosen are about equally distributed between the Old and New Testaments. Ralph has 44 texts from the Old and 38 from the New; John Erskine, 13 and 17, respectively; and Hugh Blair, 47 and 43, respectively. The books from which Ralph Erskine drew primarily are Isaiah, John, and Psalms. John Erskine used

Isaiah, John, and Psalms. Hugh Blair used Psalms, Proverbs, 1 Corinthians, and Acts. The following chart shows the complete distribution:

<u>Old Testament</u>				<u>New Testament</u>			
	R.E.	J.E.	H.B.		R.E.	J.E.	H.B.
Gen.	4		4	Matt.	4	1	4
Exod.			1	Mark			1
Lev.				Luke	4	1	2
Num.				John	8	4	4
Deut.	2			Acts	2		5
Josh.		1		Rom.	4	1	4
Ju.&Ru.				1 Cor.	2		9
1&2 Sa,	1			2 Cor.	1	2	2
1&2 Ki.			2	Gal.	4		1
1&2 Ch.		1		Eph.			
Ez.&Ne.	1		1	Phil.		1	1
Esth.			1	Col.	2		
Job			2	1 Th.			
Psal.	6	3	16	2 Th.			
Prov.	2	2	13	1 Tim.		2	2
Ecc.	2		4	2 Tim.			
S.of S.	4			Ti.&Ph.			1
Is.	10	6	2	Heb.	1	2	1
Je.&La.	2		1	Jam.		1	2
Ezek.	4			1 Pet.			
Dan.				2 Pet.			3
Hos.	1			1 John	2		
Jo.&Am.				2&3 Jo.			
Ob.&Jo.	1			Jude			
Mi.&Na.				Rev.	4	2	1
Ha.&Ze.	1						
Hag.	1						
Zech.	2						
Mal.							

One will note that John Erskine and Hugh Blair have completely neglected the prophets, with the exception of Isaiah and Jeremiah. Also, John Erskine has only two sermons from the books prior to the Psalms. Ralph Erskine has four sermons from the Song of Solomon, which appears to be somewhat out of proportion. But otherwise there seems to be a good

distribution of texts. Due to the moral character of Blair's sermons, it is not surprising to find the number of texts selected from Proverbs.

These preachers did not shy away from the more familiar texts of the Bible, though there are verses like John 3:16 on which none of them have left us a sermon. However, we have sermons on verses like: Rom. 8:28; Matt. 28:19; Heb. 13:8; Gal 2:19; 1 John 4:19; Rev. 22:1; Psalm 23:4; Gen. 1:1; and Rom. 1:16. There are also sermons on many rather obscure passages. For instance, Hugh Blair's on Gen. 47:8--"And Pharoah said unto Jacob, How old art thou?" Or Ralph Erskine's on Song of Sol. 2:13--"Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." Or John Erskine's on Isaiah 30:20--"Thine eyes shall see thy teachers."

### SUBJECTS

It was Ralph Erskine's custom, towards the end of his introduction, to state his subject in the form of a doctrine or an observation. For example, in his sermon, "Law-Death, Gospel-Life," after analyzing and explaining the text, he says,

But I shall endeavour further to explain the words upon the following observation. Doct. 'That to be dead to the law, in the point of justification, is necessary in order to our living unto God in point of sanctification: "I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God."<sup>1</sup>

However, there are a few instances where no formal doctrinal

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1. Vol. II, p. 261.

proposition is laid down, but rather several observations are considered. In one such sermon he says, "The subject being too copious for any one doctrine, we would just offer some remarks ...."<sup>1</sup> He does not suggest what the subject is and leaves it to the sermon itself to indicate that it is "The Power and Policy of Satan Bound and Baffled by the Lord Jesus Christ."

John Erskine also made it clear in his introductions what his subject was to be. Sometimes he stated directly the subject to be discussed. For instance, in "Qualifications Necessary for Teachers of Christianity" he says, "...permit me to represent some of the qualifications necessary in the spiritual instructor."<sup>2</sup> In his sermon, "On Public Spirit," he states, "I thought no subject better calculated to procure attention to this infant institution, and to other plans of like extensive usefulness, than the duty of public spirit...."<sup>3</sup> At other times, though, he implied his subject, when he mentioned the purpose he hoped to accomplish in the sermon, as in "Ministers of the Gospel Cautioned Against Giving Offence," in which he says, "I intend, in discoursing on this passage, first to explain the duty of giving no offence; then to inculcate upon myself and my brethren in the ministry, the practice of that duty; and, lastly, to conclude with some practical reflections on what may be delivered."<sup>4</sup>

Hugh Blair followed much the same practice as John Erskine,

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1. Vol. VIII, p. 79. See also Vol. VI, p. 201; Vol. VIII, p. 48.

2. Vol. I, p. 2.

3. Vol. II, p. 102.

4. Vol. I, pp. 46, 47.

in either stating or implying his subject in the introduction. For instance, in "On Gentleness," after a brief discussion of 'wisdom,' he states, "One of the chief characters by which the wisdom from above is distinguished, is gentleness, of which I am now to discourse."<sup>1</sup> Or, in "On the Importance of Order in Conduct," where he remarks, "I shall point out some of those parts of conduct wherein it is most material to virtue that order take place; and then shall conclude with shewing the high advantages which attend it."<sup>2</sup>

In no sermon is reference ever made to a subject having been given out with the text, and this, together with a difference in wording, makes it probable that the titles for the printed sermons were added at a later date.

The subjects on which they preached may be classified as (1) Doctrinal, (2) Moral, and (3) Experimental. By doctrinal sermons are meant those that teach the facts and truths of the Christian faith. By moral sermons, those that deal with morality, both general and specific. By experimental sermons, those that present the varied experiences of the Christian life.

That Ralph Erskine was primarily concerned with doctrine is shown by the fact that he always formulated some doctrinal proposition to be the basis of his sermon. However, what he sometime called 'doctrine' should, under the above classifi-

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1. Vol. I, p. 135.

2. Vol. II, p. 3.



cation, be termed 'moral' or 'experimental.' But it is true that the great majority of his sermons deal with doctrinal matters. His subjects are generally the great central themes of Christianity: the person and work of Christ, sin and salvation, faith and hope, the grace of God. Among the many titles are: "The Saving Sight," "Redemption by Christ," "Faith in Christ the Surest Way of Relief in the Saddest Case," "The Best Match," "The Comer's Conflict," "The Strength of Sin," "The Word of Salvation Sent to Sinners," "The Giving Love of Christ and the Receiving Property of Faith," and "The Day of Effectual Calling, a Levelling Day."

Experimental subjects form the second largest class. He considers such matters as comfort, assurance, the assistance to be expected in the trials and tribulations of life, the privileges of the Christian. Some of the subjects are: "Dark Providences Cleared in Due Time," "The Builder's Armour," "The Best Company in the Most Lonely Case," "The Saint's Duty in Evil Times," and "Heaven Posed and Pressed with Questions and Demands."

While doctrine was his first love, morals were not neglected. In fact, in his preaching these two were inevitably joined as complementary to one another. But to have called Ralph Erskine a 'moral' preacher would have pained him deeply, for that term in his day was applied to those who preached ethics without reference to Christian truth, and this he cer-

tainly did not do. Some of his sermons that may be classified as 'moral' are: "Gospel-Principle, the Foundation of Gospel-Practice," "The Law of God's House," "Carnal Consultation Unfolded," and "Self-Conceit, Incident to a Multitude of Professors."

To John Erskine, also, doctrine was important, as is evidenced by the number of his doctrinal sermons, and this was natural for an Evangelical. These sermons center mainly around the person and work of Christ, though there are other emphases. Some of the titles are: "The Important Mystery of the Incarnation," "Power Given to Christ for Blessing the Elect," "Jesus Seen of Angels," "On Death," and "On Infant Baptism." His experimental sermons are only slightly fewer in number. They are primarily practical and common sense and deal with such matters as "Difficulties of the Pastoral Office," "Directions for Hearing Sermons," "On an Open and Intrepid Adherence to Vital Christianity," "On Sorrow for the Death of Friends," and "On Prayers for Men in Public Office." We find that John Erskine has a larger percentage of 'moral' sermons than Ralph, and that he concerns himself with preaching on specific virtues, whereas Ralph does not. There are topics like: "On Self-Denial," "On Lukewarmness in Religion," "On Goodness and Fidelity," "On Fidelity in Personal Duties," and "On Public Spirit."

The preaching of Hugh Blair would undoubtedly have been

criticized by Ralph Erskine as 'moral preaching,' for Blair's subjects are generally on some specific virtue or evil, or on some moral excellence that is representative of the Christian (i.e. the respectable man). There are sermons: "On Candour," "On Envy," "On Moderation," "On Curiosity Concerning the Affairs of Others," "On the Duties of the Young," "On the Importance of Order in Conduct." His 'experimental' sermons are inclined to represent the benefits that are to be derived from religion or to make suggestions regarding the proper performance of religious duties. Some of the topics are: "On the Improvement of Time," "On the Influence of Religion Upon Adversity," "On the Benefits to be Derived from the House of Mourning," "On the Importance of Public Worship," and "On Prayer." While the doctrines of the faith are not primary in his preaching, he does preach on doctrine, some of the great truths. For example, "On the Death of Christ," "On the Creation of the World," "On the Ascension of Christ," "On the Immortality of the Soul and a Future State," and "On the Last Judgment."

All three men were careful to choose appropriate subjects for the sermons that they preached on special occasions. Ralph Erskine preached on "Covenanting Grace for Covenanting Work," at the renewal of the National Covenants. At the ordination of John Hunter his subject was "Gospel-Compulsion; Or, Ministerial Power and Authority." At the first meeting of the

Associate Synod, "Temple Desolation Making Way for Temple Restoration." John Erskine, before the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, chose as his topic, "Qualifications Necessary for Teachers of Christianity"; before the managers of the Orphan Hospital, "The Education of Poor Children"; on the death of the Rev. John Watson, "On Sorrow for the Death of Friends." Hugh Blair was no less judicious in his choices. For two of his communion sermons the subjects are: "On Communion as a Preparation for Death" and "On Drawing Near to God." For the National Fast his topic was "On Love of Our Country"; for the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, "On the Importance of Religious Knowledge to Mankind."

### CONSTRUCTION

By 'construction' is meant the outline and arrangement of a sermon. This will include three parts: introduction, discussion, and conclusion. We shall consider these separately.

#### Their Introductions:

Every sermon that Ralph Erskine preached had an introduction, and, in general, there was a definite pattern that he followed with little variation. He used his introductions primarily for the explication of the text. His method was to indicate the suitableness of the text for the occasion or the times; to show its place in, and relationship to, the context;

to divide it and draw out the emphasis of each phrase; to make observations from it; to deduce the subject or doctrine to be discussed; to give other Scriptural backing; and to set down the outline to be followed. These introductions were often quite long, and frequently they had the failing of summarizing rather than introducing.

His sermons always began with the text. This is sufficiently evident from the first few lines of most of his discourses, where again and again we find him making reference to the text as having just been mentioned.

Next, he desired to make clear his purpose in preaching on the text. It may have been that it fitted into a series of sermons that he was preaching. Or it may have been particularly appropriate to the occasion on which it was used. There are numerous instances of this in the sermons delivered during communion seasons. Or it may have been appropriate to the times in which he lived or to the spiritual condition of his people.

Then followed the explication of the text with regard to the context. We shall later deal at length with the method and use of interpretation of the text, which he introduced at this point, and no consideration will be given it here.

After explaining the place of the text in its Scriptural relationship, and after dealing with the technical problems of word usage and translation, Erskine next proceeded to divide

the text into sections and to extract the significance of each part. For example, in his sermon, "The Main Question of the Gospel Catechism," on Matt. 22:42--"What think ye of Christ?"--after he has finished with the context, he says, "To divide this text too critically, would, I suppose, be the way to confuse it; but I think every word hath an emphasis therein."<sup>1</sup> Then he proceeds, briefly, to consider the four parts: the interrogative particle, 'What'; the verb, 'think'; the pronoun, 'ye'; and the object or matter of the question, 'Christ.'

Having set the background, he next suggested the observation or doctrine that he proposed to prosecute, and we have indicated in our discussion of subjects that nearly every sermon has such an observation formally stated. While Erskine usually confined himself to one such doctrine, in his longer sermons he sometimes prosecuted several.<sup>2</sup>

Following the statement of doctrine, there was often a confirmation of it from other passages of Scripture. Then, finally, he proceeded to sketch the outline he was to use, enumerating the points one by one. Such an outline is present in every sermon and is the last part of the introduction.

The introductions of John Erskine present a little more variety. In fact, one of his sermons has no introduction at all; others have only a sentence or two; still others are comparatively long. However, there are certain elements that are

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1. Vol. IV, pp. 5, 6.

2. Cf. "Self-Conceit Incident to a Multitude of Professors," Vol. I.

common to most of them: mention of the text, the relationship of the text and context, the appropriateness of the text to the occasion or to some situation in life, and, finally, a statement of the purpose of the sermon or the outline to be followed. Omission of one or more of these, with the exception of the first, and variation in their order are not unusual.

Like Ralph, John Erskine began his sermons by quoting the text. But, unlike Ralph, he was not so much concerned in his introductions with the explication of the text, as with making clear its practical value and significance for his people. This helps to explain why he does not enter into many discussions on problems of interpretation, but prefers a brief reference to the circumstances or occasion on which the text was uttered. He had two methods of procedure. One was to begin with the text and relate it to the events or spiritual conditions in his own day. The other was to reverse the order, beginning with a situation and applying the text to it. Most of his sermons for special occasions follow this second method.

The last part of John Erskine's introductions was the purpose or outline. Sometimes he simply listed the points that he was to discuss, as he does in his sermon, "On Death," where he says, "In discoursing on these words, I shall endeavour to direct your attention to the enemy, to the conqueror, to the wonders, and to the completeness of the victory, which

they represent to us."<sup>1</sup> Sometimes he stated the aim that he had in mind. For example, "But it must be of the greatest importance, to consider in what sense the people of God are all righteous; that, by applying these marks to ourselves, we may be able to judge whether we are among the happy number."<sup>2</sup> Sometimes he combined the two, purpose and outline.

In general, his introductions were brief and to the point, but frequently they had the failing of not introducing the subject.

Hugh Blair's introductions are similar to those of John Erskine in several ways. They are generally brief; they do not discuss problems of interpretation; and they set the stage for the main discussion, instead of giving a preview, as Ralph Erskine's often do. Yet there is less variation in the method he follows, and his approach is less directed at pointing out the practical significance of what he is to say.

Like both the Erskines, Blair began his sermons with the text, and from the fact that all three of these men followed this custom, it is evident that it was the widespread, if not the universal, custom in the eighteenth century.

For the remainder of his introduction he usually had this method: an observation on the conditions of man or the statement of some truth; the relationship of the text to this; and the outline or purpose that he had in mind. It is evident at once

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1. Vol. II, p. 477.  
2. Vol. I, p. 280.



that this method is similar to that of John Erskine, and, like him, Blair often reverses the first two items.

In reading the first sentences of his sermons, one finds the type of observations that he uses to set the stage for his discussion. For instance, "The life of man has always been a very mixed state...."<sup>1</sup> "Much communing with themselves there has always been among mankind."<sup>2</sup> "Sobriety of mind is one of those virtues which the present condition of human life strongly inculcates."<sup>3</sup> "The state of man on earth, is manifestly designed for the trial of his virtue."<sup>4</sup> From such statements he developed the problem or question or truth he was to consider, and then he showed how applicable the text was, either as the solution or as an illustration or as a summary. Variety was offered when the text was discussed first.

Occasionally, Blair presented only an observation without making reference to the text,<sup>5</sup> or he gave the circumstances on which the text was uttered and used them as the basis for a meditation.<sup>6</sup>

Like John Erskine, he customarily ended his introductions with the purpose or outline. Sometimes he did this by listing his points, as in "On Devotion": "Of this character, I intend, through Divine assistance, to discourse; and shall endeavour,

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1. Vol. I, p. 24.

2. Vol. I, p. 215.

3. Vol. I, p. 280.

4. Vol. II, p. 138.

5. Cf. "On the Unchangeableness of the Divine Nature," Vol. II.

6. Cf. "On the Death of Christ," Vol. I.

I. To explain the nature of devotion; II. To justify and recommend it; and, III. To rectify some mistakes concerning it."<sup>1</sup> At other times he simply gave his purpose. For example, "What I propose is to point out some of the chief occasions on which patience is required; and to recommend and enforce the exercise of it, in order to our possessing our souls."<sup>2</sup>

### Their Discussions:

Following the introduction, in every sermon there came the discussion or development, in which the text was treated. This treatment consisted of one of three methods. It may have been topical, with the subject developed according to its own nature and with no real reference to the text. It may have been textual, with the text furnishing both the subject and the divisions for the sermon. Or, it may have been expository, with the divisions being the several parts of the text. With these three methods in mind, we are to consider the ways in which these men developed their sermons, together with their use of outlines.

The largest number of Ralph Erskine's sermons are textual. A good example is seen in "The Gradual Conquest; Or, Heaven Won by Little and Little," on Deut. 7:1--"And the Lord thy God will put out these nations before thee, by little and little."<sup>3</sup> The headings are:

I. Who are the true Israel of God.

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1. Vol. I, p. 243.

2. Vol. III, p. 205.

3. Vol. IV, pp. 428 ff.

- II. The heavenly Canaan.
- III. What nations of enemies and oppositions are in the way.
- IV. The Conqueror described.
- V. The Manner of the conquest.
- VI. The Reasons of the doctrine.
- VII. Application.

Another example is found in "The Sword of Justice Awakened Against God's Fellow," on Zech. 13:7--"Awake, O Sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts."<sup>1</sup> These are the divisions:

- I. The character of the person against whom this sword doth awake.
- II. The nature and quality of this sword.
- III. The manner how this sword did awake.
- IV. The special hand Jehovah had in calling this sword to awake.
- V. The reasons of the doctrine.
- VI. The application.

Ralph Erskine's sermons using the topical method are also rather numerous. Though in these the text furnishes little more than the subject, yet rarely does he admit it, as he does in the first of his series, "On Prayer," in which he says, "Now, having chosen this text only as a foundation of what I would offer on the subject of prayer, I shall take no further notice of the text in a particular way, but apply myself to the general matter thereof."<sup>2</sup> The text for this sermon is Romans 12:12--"Continuing instant in prayer"--and the headings are:

- I. Premise some general considerations concerning prayer.
- II. Speak of the nature of prayer.
- III. Speak of the various kinds of prayer.
- IV. Speak of the necessity of prayer.

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1. Vol. I, pp. 1 ff.

2. Vol. VI, p. 608.

- V. Illustrate the excellency of prayer.
- VI. Application.

Another illustration of this topical method is in "Heaven Posed and Pressed with Questions and Demands," on the text, Isaiah 55:11--"Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me things to come; concerning my sons, and concerning the works of my hands, command ye me."<sup>1</sup> His divisions are:

- I. The confirmation of the doctrine.
- II. Some questions he allows us to ask.
- III. How and wherein he allows us to command him.
- IV. The reasons of the doctrine.
- V. Application.

While some of his sermons tend towards exposition,<sup>2</sup> there is none that could properly be called expository.

Ralph Erskine made full use of the outline. We have noted that in his introductions he always announced the main divisions of his discourse. Occasionally, these numbered only two, never over seven, and usually five or six. As he proceeded with his discussions, he repeated the headings at the proper time, no doubt with the purpose of preventing the congregation from losing the trend of thought. He did not confine himself to outlining the main points only, for he had innumerable subdivisions under each of these, and then under each subdivision, more subdivisions. A good example of the extent to which he carried his outline is found in his sermon entitled "The Strength of Sin,"<sup>3</sup> in which he considers two observations, under which are

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1. Vol. VIII, pp. 404 ff.

2. Cf. "Christ the True Moses," Vol. VIII, pp. 48 ff.

3. Vol. V, pp. 1 ff.

five and six main divisions respectively. The sixth division of the second observation has four subdivisions. The second of these is divided into thirteen points. The thirteenth point has ten divisions. The tenth is divided into two parts, the first part having two further divisions. The second of these has four points. If one can follow this maze of subdivisions, it will be evident how detailed an outline Erskine used. While it is an admirable accomplishment to set down such a plan, it is difficult in reading the sermon, and no doubt much more so in hearing them, not to become so entangled in the intricacies of the vehicle as to lose sight of the direction in which it is going.

He follows no set order in his divisions. There is generally no logical relationship between one heading and the next. His method of formulating points seems to have been primarily by the use of the questions, What? Who? When? Where? Why? How? and the like, the selection varying according to the nature of the text and subject. Transition from one heading to the next was accomplished by the use of certain stock phrases.

In his subdivisions we find a sort of rhythm that helps to serve as an aid to memory, though Erskine does not seem to employ any mnemonic devices. For instance, his subdivisions may be all nouns, as in "Glad Tidings in Sad Times," where he compares the church of God to a city, because it is a place of (1) security, (2) society, (3) unity, (4) trade and traffic,

(5) freedom and liberty, (6) order and regularity, (7) rest, (8) privileges, (9) pomp and splendor, and (10) pleasure and beauty.<sup>1</sup> Or the subdivisions may be all adverbs, as in "The Happy Congregation," where he says that God's power in gathering people is exerted (1) congruously and agreeably, (2) affectionately and lovingly, (3) efficaciously, (4) seasonably, (5) surprisingly, (6) sovereignly, (7) particularly, (8) successfully, (9) irreversibly, and (10) remarkably.<sup>2</sup>

The last matter in this discussion of Ralph Erskine's outlines is the proportion that he gives to the various divisions. The one important observation to be made is that the application, or final point, generally receives the greatest proportional emphasis. It is usually longer than any other division and often longer than the remainder of the sermon. In his series of sermons entitled "Gospel-Principle, the Foundation of Gospel-Practice," eight out of the thirteen sermons are devoted to the application. However, the usual proportion is that found in "Christ, the People's Covenant," where the application is considered in twenty-seven out of the sixty-one pages. The amount devoted to the other divisions is never proportionally uniform, varying from sermon to sermon.

Turning now to John Erskine, we find that he developed the majority of his sermons according to the topical method, deriving the subject from the text, or using the text as a sort of

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1. Vol. VII, pp. 264 ff.

2. Vol. III, pp. 338 ff.

motto. For example, the following are the divisions of his sermon, "The Qualifications Necessary for Teachers of Christianity,"<sup>1</sup> on the text, James 3:1--"My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation":

- I. Personal religion.
- II. Orthodoxy, or soundness in the faith.
- III. A tolerable genius and capacity, with a competent measure of true learning.
- IV. Prudence and discretion.
- V. A due mixture of a studious disposition and of an active spirit.

Another illustration, in which the text serves simply as a motto, is in "The People of God Considered as All Righteous," on Isaiah 60:21--"Thy people shall be all righteous."<sup>2</sup> The headings are:

- I. As they are all interested in the righteousness of Christ.
- II. As they have an inherent righteousness wrought in them.
- III. By abounding in works of righteousness to the praise and glory of God.

He uses the textual method of development next in order of frequency. An example of this is his outline for "Power Given to Christ for Blessing the Elect," on John 17:2--"As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."<sup>3</sup> The divisions are:

- I. The gift of a certain number of mankind to Jesus.
- II. The power over all flesh, given to Christ, in behalf of the elect.
- III. The eternal life which certainly shall be given to all that number.
- IV. The connection of Christ's power over all flesh, with his giving eternal life to those given him by the Father.

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1. Vol. I, pp. 1 ff.

2. Vol. I, pp. 278 ff.

3. Vol. I, pp. 445 ff.

Topical and textual methods are the two that John Erskine primarily used. Like Ralph, he was not an expository preacher. There are a few of his sermons that possess elements of exposition, but there is only one that may be classified as expository. This is his sermon, "On an Open and Intrepid Adherence to Vital Christianity," on the text, Romans 1:16--"For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."<sup>1</sup> His two points are:

- I. To consider the profession made by the Apostle.
- II. To represent the reason he assigns in vindication of it.

John Erskine usually followed his announced plan, though in at least one sermon he has no formal outline.<sup>2</sup> In others, while he suggests what his general purpose is, the specific points are not mentioned until they are brought out one by one in the course of the discussion. The number of divisions varies from sermon to sermon, and, with the exception in which there is no outline, there are at least two and rarely more than six headings. The usual number is three or four. Also, while the headings are often subdivided, they are never done so to the extent to which Ralph Erskine carried it. In fact, John Erskine confined himself almost entirely to occasional subdivisions of his main points only.

Like Ralph, he had no set order of arranging his points,

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1. Vol. II, pp. 236 ff.

2. "On the Unprincipled Contempt of Religion," Vol. II.



except that his sermons often close with the application or the practical improvement of the subject. There is not much of a logical progression from one division to the next, and his divisions might well have been interchanged without upsetting the trend of thought. The transition from one point to the next is usually accomplished by means of set phrases. Unlike Ralph's habitual practice, there is not an undue proportion of emphasis on the application.

Only a few of Hugh Blair's sermons are not topical, and in this respect his preaching resembles that of John Erskine. The text is used primarily to furnish the subject. An example is seen in his sermon, "On Devotion," on Acts 10:2--"Cornelius--- a devout man."<sup>1</sup> His divisions are:

- I. To explain the nature of devotion.
- II. To justify and recommend it.
- III. To rectify some mistakes concerning it.

A second illustration is in his sermon entitled "On Death," on the text, Ecc. 12:5--"Man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets."<sup>2</sup> His purpose is to show in what manner we should be affected

- I. By the death of strangers, or indifferent persons.
- II. By the death of friends.
- III. By the death of enemies.

Like John Erskine, he has several sermons that are textual, but in comparison with the number of his topical sermons, they are relatively few. The following are two examples. The first

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1. Vol. I, pp. 242 ff.  
 2. Vol. III, pp. 82 ff.

is "On the Happiness of a Future State," on Rev. 7:9--"After this I beheld, and lo! a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."<sup>1</sup> The sermon~~s~~ has the purpose of suggesting the prospect afforded of a state of future felicity. These are the headings:

- I. A state of blessed society.
- II. A numerous society.
- III. A society gathered out of all the varieties of the human race.
- IV. The happiness of the society.
- V. Rest from the toils and troubles of life.
- VI. The sanctity of the blessed and means by which it is attained.

The second example is in "On the Folly of the Wisdom of the World," on 1 Cor. 3:19--"The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."<sup>2</sup> The divisions are:

- I. What the nature and spirit of the wisdom is which is here condemned.
- II. In what sense and on what account it is styled foolishness with God.

While a few of his sermons have some characteristics, Hugh Blair was not an expository preacher. In this respect all three ministers were alike, and it is interesting to find these three men, from divergent backgrounds and periods, neglecting exposition to the almost exclusive use of the other two methods.

In his use of an outline, in the number of his divisions, in the order of his divisions, in the proportion of his empha-

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1. Vol. II, pp. 230 ff.  
 2. Vol. V, pp. 358 ff.

sis, he is much like John Erskine. However, in his transitions from one point to the next Blair is generally more smooth than either of the Erskines.

### Their Conclusions:

For Ralph Erskine the conclusion was usually the final point in the discussion and was termed the 'application.' There were two methods that he had of presenting this application, and he used them about equally.

The first was that he would make "application in several inferences." This meant that he concluded the sermon with some observations or truths that had been derived from the discussion. He would list these as one, two, three, etc., and there was rarely a logical relationship between them. The following<sup>1</sup> is an example, in outline, of this type of conclusion:

#### V. Application.

1. What a dreadful evil Sin is.
2. What a wonderful person Jesus is.
3. The difference between the law and the gospel.
4. The foundation of all true fellowship with God.
5. The malignity of the sin of unbelief.
6. The ground for the boldness and confidence of faith in Christ.
7. The best mark of a believer in Christ.
8. The ground of terror to all unbelievers.
9. The ground of comfort to all believers.
10. The duty of all that hear and know this joyful sound.

The second method was to have several set headings under which he grouped his final words of advice. The number of such

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1. "The Harmony of the Divine Attributes Displayed," Vol. II, pp. 157 ff.

headings is large, but, of course, not all were included in every sermon. These are the ones he used: Application (1) For information, (2) For trial and examination, (3) For terror, (4) For consolation, (5) For exhortation, (6) For lamentation, (7) For reproof and refutation, (8) For dehortation and caution, (9) For direction, (10) For advice, (11) For address, and (12) For conviction and humiliation. Under these he would list and develop his suggestions and observations, his pleadings and warnings.

However, there was never any complete distinction between the two methods. It was usually the case that his application for information included many of the observations that would have been made in the "application in several inferences," while this latter often included among its points such things as "For terror" and "For exhortation."

From the amount of space that he gave to application, it is evident that he considered this to be the most important part of his sermon. His conclusion was no doubt meant to be the great climax for which the introduction and development had been the preparation. It was here that he concentrated his greatest efforts.

John Erskine also had two ways in which he presented his conclusions, though two sermons end with the discussion and have no formal conclusion. The first method that he employed was to have the application as the final point in his develop-

ment or as a separate section following the body of the discussion. He would make some statement as, "I now conclude, with some improvement of the subject,"<sup>1</sup> or, "I am now to point out the practical lessons,"<sup>2</sup> or, "Let me conclude this discourse with one reflection,"<sup>3</sup> announcing that this was his conclusion. Then he would usually list the observations or reflections that he wanted to point out, though he did not always number them as Ralph Erskine did.

The second way was different from the first, and from both of Ralph's, in the fact that the transition from discussion to conclusion is hardly noticeable. There is no break, no formal statement. The last point of the discussion flows smoothly into the application. In this respect the two men differed the most in their conclusions. John Erskine, also, had exhortation, lamentation, appeal, advice, and others included in his final remarks, but he did not usually list them under such set headings.

With few exceptions his conclusions are short, and to this extent they were less important than the development. But this is not to say that they were unimportant, for in his final paragraphs he drove home the force of his message.

Hugh Blair followed three ways in presenting his conclusions. In his first way he was much like the Erskines, but he did not use this method to any great extent. It consisted of

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1. Vol. I, p. 440.  
 2. Vol. II, p. 459.  
 3. Vol. II, p. 165.

the practical application in certain inferences or observations, and often, though not always, formed the final point in the development. The inferences might be numbered and relatively independent, or they might follow each other in some sort of logical order.

His second way was to give a summary of what had preceded and then to add a few concluding remarks in a paragraph or two. These remarks usually stressed the value and significance of the truth he had been discussing, or perhaps they further explained and reinforced it. When he preached on special occasions, the conclusion included some reference and application to them.

The third way was used most frequently. It involved the same sort of a summary, but followed it with words of advice, exhortation, and warning, much as John Erskine did. There was no set outline as to how these were given, consecutive sentences varying between warning and advice. Sometimes he would address certain groups of people and offer special exhortations to them.

Blair's conclusions, with the exception of those forming divisions of the discourse, were short, some being only two or three sentences. Like John Erskine, he evidently considered his discussion as the most important thing.

## COMPOSITION

Certain elements which these three ministers employed in composing their sermons will be considered in this section. They are the use of quotations and illustrations, of explanation, of argument, and of application, and, finally, the characteristic features of their style.

### Quotations and illustrations:

The Bible furnished most of Ralph Erskine's quotations and illustrations. It was the book with which both he and his hearers were most familiar, and, by being the Word of God, it was of value per se. There were, in general, four ways in which he introduced Biblical material into his sermons.

The first was to quote a verse and then to give the reference where it could be found. For example, he says,

Christ's works are not only like unto the Father's but the same in substance, as flowing from one and the same essence and power; for, 'What things soever the Father doth, these also doth the Son likewise.' John 5:19.<sup>1</sup>

In ten of his sermons<sup>2</sup> he has 386 such quotations with the reference.

The second method was to quote a verse without making reference to its location in the Bible. This is seen in the following passage,

O! what will you do, when he that rent the vail, that you might have access to God, will rend these heavens, and come down to judgment? 'Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him!'<sup>3</sup>

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1. Vol. I, p. 6.

2. Vol. I, Sermons 1-10.

3. Vol. I, p. 108.

In the same ten sermons he has 464 such quotations.

The third way was to mention the Scripture reference, together with an event or character, a summary of thought in a passage, or an indirect quotation. For example, "That Adam, once being polluted himself, he cannot but beget a polluted child: hence we read, Gen. 5:3, that he begat a son in his own likeness, after his image."<sup>1</sup> In the same sermons there are 213 such references.

The fourth way was to use Biblical language or to refer to some person or event in the Bible without mentioning where it might be found. There are innumerable instances of this way. An illustration of this Biblical language is the following:

He was put in the wine-press of divine vengeance, and bruised there: he was not only bruised in his name, being called a mad-man and a devil; not only bruised in his estate, while the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of Man had no where to lay his head....<sup>2</sup>

From the Scripture passages and references counted--some 1063--besides those of the last group, which are too numerous to count, one can see that there is a large amount of Biblical material in these ten sermons. The simple listing of this number of verses and references would consume a great deal of space. So it is very evident that Ralph Erskine accorded a major place to the Bible. The books to which he most often

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1. Vol. I, p. 299.

2. Vol. I, p. 168.



refers are Isaiah, Psalms, John, Hebrews, Matthew, Romans, Acts, and Luke. His use of Scripture was fairly constant throughout a sermon, and there was no particular concentration of references at any one place.

Having seen the amount of Scripture material present, there is little need to wonder that he made comparatively little use of extra-Biblical quotations and illustrations.

Many of his illustrations from outside the Bible deal with the days of Greece and Rome and were no doubt derived from his study of Latin and Greek. Church history and the stories of the Christian saints and martyrs were also fruitful sources of illustration. Frequent reference was made to the introduction of Christianity into Scotland and the Reformation there. He referred to such men as Augustine, Cyprian, and Ambrose. He mentioned Anastatius, the emperor who was "by the hand of God, shot to death with a hot thunderbolt, because he was lukewarm in the catholic cause, and not zealous against the Arian faction."<sup>1</sup> There were the lives of the martyrs, or rather their deaths. The pure virgin Cecilia who, by her conduct at death, was the means of converting four hundred persons.<sup>2</sup> The French woman who was drowned because she refused to say an Ave Maria or a Pater Noster.<sup>3</sup>

There were also anecdotes derived from various other places. For instance, in speaking of the fact that mercy sud-

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1. Vol. I, p. 348.

2. Vol. I, p. 321.

3. Vol. VI, p. 398.

denly catches some, he suggests that it might catch

as it did the man, who coming to church, yet hating to hear, set his elbows on the desk, and put his fingers into his ears; but while he was napping, one of his elbows falls down, and as his finger went out of his ear, a word of the sermon came into it, by which the Lord caught him, converted him, and gathered him to Shiloh.<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes he made use of his imagination and observation in forming illustrations. For example, "There are some birds when there is a muirburn, they will flutter over their young, when they are in hazard of being burnt, even till they burn themselves."<sup>2</sup> So Christ fluttered over his young till he was burnt to death.

These examples will suffice to show the types of illustrations that Ralph Erskine used and, in a measure, how he applied them to his subject. What is significant about them is the fact that he used them almost casually and never allowed them to carry the weight of the discussion.

We find quite a number of extra-Biblical quotations in Ralph Erskine's sermons. Many times the name of the source is given, but at others some phrase like "as one says" or "it is remarked by one" introduces them.

Of the sources that he names, the most frequently used are Martin Luther, Augustine, the Confession of Faith and Catechisms, and the metrical psalms. Among the classical authors whom he quoted at least once are Aristotle, Socrates, Tully,

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1. Vol. III, pp. 392, 393.

2. Vol. IV, p. 249.

Seneca, and Ovid. From the days of the New Testament to the Reformation: Josephus, Bernard, Chrysostom, Julian the Apostate, and Tertullian. The Reformation and afterwards: Erasmus, Patrick Hamilton, Rutherford, Owen, Burgess, Moulin, John Wellwood, and Manton.

He has almost twenty quotations from Luther. The one that he quotes twice, in slightly different words, is a "saying of Luther's Nolo Deum Absolutum; 'Lord, deliver me from an absolute God, a God out of Christ.'"<sup>1</sup> The saying of Augustine that he quotes twice is, "Augustine being asked, What was the first grace? Answered, Humility: What is the second? Answered, Humility: What is the third? Answered, Humility."<sup>2</sup> Quotations from the Standards of the Church were sometimes made without reference to their source, on the assumption, no doubt, that the people should be sufficiently familiar with them.

Many of his quotations are anonymous. Some are the last words of the dying, sayings of the fathers, proverbs and popular maxims, or quotations that can only be classed as miscellaneous. The two quotations that he quotes three and four times respectively are the following. The first, "...the woman that said, 'Though I cannot dispute for Christ, yet I can burn for him.'"<sup>3</sup> The second, "'For, as one says, you may take a carnal man, tie him to a post, and then kill him with praying and preaching only.'"<sup>4</sup>

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1. Vol. II, p. 383.  
 2. Vol. III, p. 137.  
 3. Vol. VI, p. 137.  
 4. Vol. I, p. 114.

For John Erskine, also, the Bible was a major source of material, and he followed the same methods as Ralph in introducing this material into his sermons. For instance, he quotes verses together with the Biblical reference, as, "It is observed of Barnabas, (Acts 2:25) that 'When he saw the grace of God he was glad; for he was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost.'"<sup>1</sup> In ten of his sermons<sup>2</sup> there are nine such quotations. He also quotes verses without the reference. For example, "Their warnings against 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,' and their exhortations 'to count all things as loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ,' are blunted and repelled...."<sup>3</sup> Of this way, in the same ten sermons, there are at least 165 instances. The third way is seen in the following: "With what rapture does he celebrate the wonders of redemption and grace, and exult in the blessings which he derived from them. Consult when you retire from this place. Psal. 18:1; 27:4; 42:1, 2; 74:1; 73:25; 104:31-35; 111; 113; 138; 145."<sup>4</sup> Besides these references there are only four others in the ten sermons.

The last method, using Biblical language or referring to some person or event without mentioning the place in the Bible where it might be found, is used very frequently. For example, "The peevish and passionate Jonah, who wished for the destruc-

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1. Vol. II, p. 136.

2. Vol. II, Sermons 1-10.

3. Vol. II, p. 64.

4. Vol. II, p. 179.

tion of a city when there were more than an Hundred and Twenty Thousand infants, rather than that his honour, as a true prophet, should suffer by the preservation of the city...."<sup>1</sup>

It is evident that for the same number of sermons John Erskine makes far less use of the Bible than Ralph Erskine, but one should bear in mind that John's sermons were usually shorter. Then, too, the statistics are not completely indicative of the amount of Biblical material present.

His illustrations from outside the Bible are few, and they are primarily historical and biographical, or the result of imagination and observation. Such illustrations as he had are nearly always brief. Sometimes his biographical ones are no more than allusions to well-known people, as for instance, "A Frederic and a Washington, might have lived obscure, and died forgotten, had the time, place and circumstances, which called forth their abilities, been different."<sup>2</sup> In somewhat this same manner he mentions Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Socrates, Aristides, the Emperor Sigismund, Sir Matthew Hale, Lord Newhall, and others. He also speaks of the contributions of certain people--Boyle, Hopeton, Lady Glenorchy, Drummond, Hope, Walker, Brown, Andrew Gardner, and William Dickson--to religion, all in the same sermon, however.<sup>3</sup>

Like Ralph, he also drew illustrations from his imagination and observation, and there are many of these. One example:

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1. Vol. II, p. 158.

2. Vol. I, p. 246.

3. "On Public Spirit," Vol. II, pp. 115 f, 121.

How would the physician be courted, who, in a seemingly incurable disease, could assure the patient, that he would recover his perfect health, and live yet many years. What dying prince would not purchase a longer lease of life, with the loss of his crown?<sup>1</sup>

Most of his quotations were from contemporary sources. They are not many, and the majority are quoted indirectly. He selected sayings of Bishop Butler, Hugh Blair, Bishop Warburton, Bishop Burnet, Grotius, Archbishop Usher, Melmoth, William Wishart, Leighton, and David Hume. The others are anonymous. These quotations occur in six sermons. In "On the Influence of Religion on National Happiness" he quotes many times from Hume's History of Great Britain, in order to refute what Hume says. The quotation from Hugh Blair is from his sermon before the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge.

When we consider Hugh Blair's use of Biblical quotations and illustrations, we discover a somewhat different situation. For Blair never mentions book, chapter, and verse. He does quote verses directly, without suggesting, though, at what place in the Bible they may be found. Usually, there is some introductory phrase before the quotation. For example, "Whereas the sinner in his prosperity, according to the allusion in the book of Job, resembles the rush that groweth up in the mire."<sup>2</sup> There are at least 120 such instances in ten sermons.<sup>3</sup>

While his direct quotations are not numerous, his sermons are full of Biblical language and allusions. The following is

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1. Vol. II, p. 16.

2. Vol. I, p. 63.

3. Vol. I, Sermons 1-10.

an instance of this use:

The period was come, when the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. For many ages, the most gross superstition had filled the earth. The glory of the incorruptible God was every-where, except in the land of Judaea, changed into images made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and beasts, and creeping things.<sup>1</sup>

Blair uses the Bible as a source of material to about the same extent as John Erskine, though his methods of presentation were not as varied. He also has fewer Biblical illustrations. His material is evenly distributed throughout his sermons, and there is no concentration, except in cases of long quotations.

Blair had comparatively few non-Biblical illustrations, and besides those derived from his imagination and observation, there were only two or three. His illustrations generally follow this example,

Visit the gayest and most fortunate man on earth, only with sleepless nights; disorder any single organ or the senses; corrode but one of his smallest nerves; and you shall presently see all his gaiety vanish; and you shall hear him complain that he is a miserable creature, and express his envy of the peasant and the cottager.<sup>2</sup>

It is somewhat strange that Blair's sermons, which had such great popularity, should have so few non-Biblical illustrations. Yet it should be remembered that besides relying upon Scripture he had sermons that often painted character sketches --the devout man, the good man, the honorable man--and these served, after a fashion, in the place of illustrations.

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1. Vol. I, p. 123.

2. Vol. I, p. 64.

Blair is given to infrequent quoting from sources outside the Bible, and, with only two exceptions, these are from the apocryphal books of the Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus. From the first he quotes on seven different occasions, usually, several verses together. From Ecclesiasticus he quotes only once.

Thus Blair and John Erskine made use of non-Biblical quotations to about the same extent. It is somewhat surprising to find how little such quoting they do, for both were well-read men, and yet they did not draw upon this background for material in their sermons.

#### Explanation:

There are many things that a congregation need to know more fully and to understand more clearly. Many passages of the Bible, great truths of the faith, certain oft-repeated Biblical words and theological terms like love, faith, and justification, all need explaining.

One of the ways in which these ministers employed explanation in their sermons was with regard to the passages on which they preached. Whatever portion of the Bible they selected, they always attempted to explain its true meaning, by showing its relationship to the context and by clearing up any uncertainties of translation or interpretation.

That Ralph Erskine was most sincere in attempting to set



before his people the precise meaning of a text is evident from the place and space that he gives to interpretation in his sermons. Almost without exception his introductions contain some effort to shed light upon the passage he is using.

He is often occupied with discussing the proper significance of individual words in a passage or with justifying his particular view of their meaning. More fully than on any other occasion, he considers the words of the text, Gen. 49:10--"The scepter shall not depart from Judah nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." He deals with the words: 'Shiloh,' 'gathering,' 'people,' and 'shall be.'<sup>1</sup> His method is briefly as follows. He asks how this term 'Shiloh' can signify Christ. He says that it is the universally accepted meaning, for "among all the divers opinions about the signification of the word Shiloh, yet all agree that it is the Messias, who is here meant." He proceeds to give six different possible derivations of the word and shows that each applies to Christ. He concludes by saying, "Whatever of these meanings you put upon the word, they are all significant, and shew, that Shiloh agrees to the person of Christ."

Next he considers the word, 'gathering.' He says,

I find this word in the original Hebrew, to be such as gives occasion to render it thus, To him shall the Expectation of the people be; or thus, 'To him shall the Obedience of the people be:' but our own translation

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1. Vol. III, pp. 290 ff.

being most excellent and agreeable to the original, I shall especially hold by it, yet, so as not to exclude the other significations.

Then the word 'people.'

The promise here respects the Gentile nations. It is not a particular set of people here intended; it is people in the plural number. All our Latin commentators translate it either aggregatio gentium, or aggregatio populorum; Junius and Tremellus, obedientia populorum.

Lastly, he discusses the words, 'shall be.' He states,

It is very true the shall be in the text here is not in the original, but it is very fitly supplied by our translators; and the certainty of this event is as strongly asserted, when these two words are left out, as when they are put in, and in my opinion somewhat stronger.

It is very unusual for him to enter so fully into a discussion of the words of the text. Generally he only mentions a word and adds that it might be better rendered in this way, or that it properly signifies such. In this he does not confine himself to his text, but occasionally brings out the proper or original meaning of a word in his Scriptural quotations as well.

Besides interpreting individual words, he sometimes states what he considers to be the right view of the text as a whole, and, if necessary, to defend his view. He will usually state the different interpretations made of a passage, but then will agree "with the current of sound divines" on the better view, which he will follow. Often he will unite different interpretations and consider them both, as he says, "I reckon it safest

to exclude neither of these."<sup>1</sup>

With regard to the context, he was most diligent in explaining the place of the text in the thought of the chapter or section. In almost every sermon he offers some remarks on the matter of the context. Sometimes he summarizes briefly without dealing with specific verses. For example, he begins his sermon on Rev. 2:10 by saying, "These words are a part of the epistle written from heaven to the Church of Smyrna; wherein Christ forewarns and forearms her, against further troubles, besides what are mentioned in the preceding verse, and exhorts her not to fear, but to be faithful."<sup>2</sup> Again, he presents, sometimes briefly, sometimes at great length, a verse by verse discussion of the related context. This might involve a whole chapter or only one or two verses.

In his explanation of texts he did not confine himself to a purely literal interpretation. He says, "There is a depth in every place of scripture, which, though it seems to be very plain to the carnal eye, yet the spiritual depth thereof cannot be founded without the help of the Spirit of God."<sup>3</sup> And again, "It is a strange text, that a gospel-minister cannot find Christ in, since the whole scriptures testify of him: as if it said nothing else but Christ, Christ."<sup>4</sup>

In some of his spiritual interpretations Ralph Erskine followed the New Testament, but in others he had no Scriptural

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1. Vol. VI, p. 432.

2. Vol. VIII, p. 185.

3. Vol. IV, pp. 4, 5.

4. Vol. I, p. 154.

precedent. For instance, in treating Isaiah 27:13, he says at the beginning, "These words are to be considered, first in their literal, and then in their typical and spiritual meaning, in order to deduce a suitable doctrine from them."<sup>1</sup> Under the typical meaning he says that

as king Cyrus was an eminent type of our Lord Jesus Christ, so the deliverance of Israel from the Babylonish captivity and Egyptian thralldom, by his means, was eminently typical of the redemption to be wrought for sinners through Jesus Christ, from their spiritual bondage.<sup>2</sup>

Ralph Erskine gave a great deal of space to presenting his explanation of Scripture passages. But, while exegesis of a text is a wise thing, the wisdom of dealing in the pulpit so fully with exegetical problems is highly questionable. However, Erskine felt that it was suitable and wise to do so, for he certainly included discussions of such problems in his sermons.

We find a rather different situation with regard to textual explanation when we turn to John Erskine. The general method of the two was no doubt the same: "When you have chosen a text, ascertain the meaning of it from the scope of the inspired writer, and the sense in which he generally uses particular expressions."<sup>3</sup> The difference, however, lies in the fact that John Erskine rarely brings discussion of varying opinions or technical questions of interpretation into his sermons.

We do find his suggesting better translations for words.

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1. Vol. VII, p. 36.

2. Vol. VII, pp. 37, 38.

3. "The Blessing of Christian Teachers," Charge to the Minister, Vol. I, p. 109.

He sometimes presents the significance of a word as determined by the teaching of Scripture as a whole. For instance, he says in one place,

Upon inquiry, it will appear, that the word 'righteous,' as describing character; in scripture language, has quite another meaning, than what many now affix to it: those only having that honourable title given them in most passages of holy writ, who have an imputed righteousness to found their claim to heaven, an inherent principle of righteousness to qualify them for the enjoyment of it, and who give evidence that this is their true character, by abounding in the outward fruits of righteousness to the divine praise and glory.<sup>1</sup>

The only time on which problems of interpretation are presented is in his sermon on 1 Tim. 3:15, 16. Here he deals with questions at surprising length. His entire introduction is devoted to the defense of his view that 'the pillar and ground of truth' relates to the mystery of godliness. Then, under nearly every division he considers some problem. First, it is the fact that 'God,' here mentioned, cannot mean 'the Father.' Then, whether 'the pillar and ground of truth' refers only to 'God manifest in the flesh,' or as well to what is said in the last part of verse 16. Finally, there come discussions on the meaning of the terms: 'mystery,' 'without controversy,' 'godliness,' 'pillar,' and 'ground.'<sup>2</sup>

Like Ralph, John Erskine nearly always placed the text in its proper context. His favorite method was to present the general setting. For instance, on 2 Cor. 6:3 he says,

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1. Vol. I, p. 280.

2. Vol. I, pp. 328 ff.

These words of the apostle Paul, which were primarily intended to do justice to his own character, and that of Timothy, his beloved son in the faith, present to the view of gospel ministers, in every age, a fair and approved pattern, which they ought to copy after, if they wish to prosper in their arduous work.<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes he states the connection of the text with the preceding verse. It is exceptional when he does present at length the details of the context, as he does in his sermon on Heb. 13:8, where his first point is a consideration of the occasion of the text.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike Ralph, he did not concern himself with giving the spiritual interpretation of his text. He does not take a verse like Psalm 88:18--"Lover and friend hast thou put far from me; and mine acquaintance into darkness"--and discourse, as Ralph Erskine might have done, on the death of Christ, or on some such subject as 'Sinning Times are Christless Times.' Rather he confines himself to using the literal meaning. The fact that many of his sermons were topical may have had an influence on this.

Textual explanation in the sermons of Hugh Blair consists mainly of references to the relationship of text and context. We do not find Blair spending his time arguing about differences of interpretation. He presents such results of critical exegesis as are necessary, without the proofs, and tries not to disturb his people with differences and doubts. In this

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1. Vol. I, p. 46.

2. Vol. I, pp. 220 ff.

respect he differs from both the Erskines.

Like them, he occasionally clarifies the meaning or translation of words. On 1 Cor. 13:12 he says, "...the other, that we see them in a riddle or enigma, which our translators have rendered by seeing them darkly."<sup>1</sup>

In handling the context he generalizes rather than specifies. He summarizes the thought or tells the story or gives the occasion, and then he fits the text into its proper place. In his sermons on the Psalms, it is his custom to summarize briefly their teaching. When he is preaching on the character or a particular trait of a Biblical person, he usually gives a brief biography, making mention of the important events that have significance for the sermon. His common method, however, is to give the occasion of the text, as for instance, in "On the Conscience Void of Offence," he begins,

These words were spoken by the Apostle Paul, in the course of that manly and spirited defence which he made for himself, when accused of sedition and impiety before Felix, the Roman Governour. He vindicates himself from the charges brought against him; but boldly avows his principles, conceals no part he had acted, gives up no doctrine he had taught, and, with the firm consciousness of innocence, appeals to his enemies themselves for the unblemished integrity of his life and character.<sup>2</sup>

In many of his sermons, though, he omits a consideration of the context altogether.

While Blair never uses a typical interpretation as the basis for a sermon, he believed in them, as no doubt John

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1. Vol. I, p. 79.

2. Vol. V, pp. 269, 270.

Erskine also did, for he says on one occasion,

If Isaac was laid upon the altar as an innocent victim; if David was driven from his throne by the wicked, and restored by the hand of God; if the brazen serpent was lifted up to heal the people; if the rock was smitten by Moses, to furnish drink in the wilderness; all were types of Christ, and alluded to his death.<sup>1</sup>

Interpretation of the text was one way in which explanation was employed. A second way was with regard to defining some of the great words and doctrines of the faith. Naturally, entire sermons were devoted to this purpose, but at times, within a sermon, a brief explanation was given for clarification. For instance, the following is an illustration from Ralph Erskine, in which he is distinguishing between justification and sanctification:

They are most distinct, (1) Justification comes from the merit of Christ; sanctification comes from the Spirit of Christ. (2) Justification makes a relative change...; sanctification makes a real change.... (3) Justification gives us a title to heaven; sanctification gives us a meetness for heaven. (4) Justification takes away the guilt of sin; sanctification takes away the filth, and power, and pollution of sin. (5) Justification is by a righteousness without us; sanctification is by a righteousness within us. (6) In justification there is an imputation of Christ's righteousness and sanctification; but in sanctification there is an implantation of grace, and something subjectively imparted.... (7) Justification is but one act and once acted; sanctification is a continual action, or a progressive work. (8) Justification is perfect and absolute; sanctification is imperfect, and but begun....<sup>2</sup>

John Erskine used explanation in this way also, though not at so much length, while Blair seldom, if ever, mentions theologi-

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1. Vol. I, p. 117.

2. Vol. I, p. 323.



cal terms.

Argument:

Ralph Erskine often felt called upon to argue for the truth as he saw it. This is particularly true in his doctrinal sermons, where he battles heresy and error with zeal and vigor. For example, he says in one place,

Here the Socinian spirit is condemned as antichristian, who say, 'That God was never alienate from man; and that God, out of his mere bounty, without any intervening satisfaction, pardons sin:' But if so, why would ever there be such a sound as, 'Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow?' Why would there have been an atonement, if it was not to avert the wrath revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men? In vain did the sword awake and smite the shepherd, if without shedding of blood there was remission.<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes he does not argue at even this length, but is content in one or two sentences to dispose of his opponents. For instance, "Where was your religion, say the Papists, before Luther and Calvin? Why, it was still in the Bible, where Popery never was."<sup>2</sup>

From reading several of his arguments, one has no difficulty in discerning what authority Erskine used as the standard of truth and as the weapon of his reasonings. It was the Bible. His argument always was, This is true because it is taught in the Bible, which is God's Word. If you are the sort of person who does not believe God, then little more need be said.

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1. Vol. I, p. 46.

2. Vol. I, p. 235.

His customary method of employing Scripture in argument is known as 'proof-texting.' In his sermon, "Law-Death, Gospel-Life," his first point is to prove the doctrine he is discussing. So he proceeds to quote and consider ten passages of Scripture, adding, "These are ten witnesses, instead of twenty that might be adduced for the confirmation of this doctrine...Receive the truth then in the love of it."<sup>1</sup>

As an auxiliary aid in argument he uses experience. In his sermon on "Self-Conceit Incident to a Multitude of Professors," he says,

We may see this doctrine abundantly clear from experience. Are we not exceeding ready to judge ourselves better than indeed we are? And to magnify ourselves, our states, our virtues, above what they are?...Is it not evident from experience, that many are dreaming that matters are well enough with them?...Is it not evident from experience, that there are more proud professors than poor converts?<sup>2</sup>

For Ralph Erskine, therefore, Scripture, together with experience, was the basis upon which practically all his argument was built.

John Erskine found it needful to use argument in his sermons, to resolve difficulties in the minds of his people and to combat errors that had arisen or that might arise. On numerous occasions he mentioned views that were divergent from his own, and especially is this so in his doctrinal sermons..

In "On Christ Bearing Witness to the Truth" there is a good illustration of this. He says,

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1. Vol. II, pp. 261-265.  
2. Vol. I, pp. 413, 414.

Is not the sentiment of the Socinians justly deemed a dangerous error, that Jesus suffered only to set before us a pattern of obedience and submission, and to seal the truth of his doctrine? Undoubtedly it is. It places Jesus on a level with the Prophets and Apostles, and with thousands of men besides, who counted not their lives dear to them, when the preservation of life, and the steadfast profession of their faith became incompatible. But it is no heresy to say, that the Son of God was born, and lived and died, to bear witness to truths of an infinite value, in a way peculiar to himself.<sup>1</sup>

We find that John Erskine depended upon Scripture for his authority. He used proof texts, but not as often as Ralph. Generally, he listed several passages of Scripture after he stated some fact or doctrine, or after he announced the divisions of his sermon. When he discussed a view opposite to his own, he usually closed the matter with some statement like, "Judge, whether you will credit the plain text of the apostles, or these men's ingenious, but strained interpretations."<sup>2</sup> So the Bible was for him the Word of God and the standard of truth as much as it was for Ralph Erskine.

But, while Ralph used experience as an auxiliary aid in argument, John Erskine used reason. So in this passage:

I know this doctrine is decried by many, as inconsistent with the goodness, the justice, the truth, and the wisdom of God.--But, doth God cease to be good, because all do not equally partake, and were not destined equally to partake, of his goodness? Is there ~~any~~ less goodness in a plan, which secures the happiness of an innumerable multitude, than in a plan, which leaves the happiness of every individual of the human race precarious? Would the salvation of men have been more probable, by leaving them to follow the dictates of a heart, deceitful above all things, but desperately wicked?<sup>3</sup>

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1. Vol. II, pp. 292, 293.

2. Vol. I, p. 354.

3. Vol. I, p. 454.

There is an argumentative mood in many of Hugh Blair's sermons, though he is usually not so bent on battling an opposite view as he is in giving proof and support for his own opinion. Blair never argues heatedly, always moderately, and the tone of his argument is, Any reasonable man can see that this is right and that is wrong, and, of course, you are a reasonable man. For example, he says,

In the second place, that the good things we receive from God are undeserved, the evils we suffer are justly merited. Every reasonable person must feel the weight of this consideration, for producing patience and submission. For, though to suffer at any rate be grievous, yet to suffer unjustly is doubly galling. Whereas, when one receives a mixed portion, whereof the goods are above his deserts, and the evils below his deserts, to complain, in such a case, is unreasonable.<sup>1</sup>

Blair preached a faith that was not irrational, and he argued from a rational point of view. Experience was an auxiliary aid to him. For instance, he used this to prove that worship should be paid to God. He says, "We need only appeal to every man's heart, whether this be not a principle which carries with it its own obligation...."<sup>2</sup> The place of the Bible in Blair's arguments is always secondary and peripheral. He does not base his reasoning upon it.

#### Application:

We have already noticed that these men often had the application as the final point in their outlines, and we have indicated

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1. Vol. IV, p. 318.

2. Vol. IV, p. 208.

the methods that they followed when it was. Now we are considering, not their method, but their composition of the application.

We saw how Ralph Erskine included a variety of matters in his application, matters like Information, Terror, Exhortation, and the like, but it should be remembered that throughout his whole sermon he made application to his people. His last point was only the great climax of it all, where the die was cast, and the people had to choose to stand either with the sheep or with the goats. In his final applications Erskine rises to the height of his oratorical appeal, and from some of his sermons it is no wonder that many people were moved to tears and sighs and groanings of the spirit.

While Ralph Erskine was concerned with a variety of titles in his outline, his primary purpose was to bring people to an acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. To this end he usually pointed out the fearful and terrible state of unbelievers as opposed to the happy state of believers; he furnished a series of tests to determine in which group a person belonged; he answered any objections that might be raised; and, finally, he made his great appeal and exhortation for the congregation to accept or reject his offer of Christ. This was his basic scheme, and the following quotations will illustrate his way of presentation.

Here is a brief, vivid description of the fate that awaits

the unbeliever:

While in a state of unbelief, the flaming sword of justice is over your neck; and who can help you, if Christ be neglected? If you remain Christless now, surely you will be speechless at the great day, when the wicked shall have none to pity them; for the judge will frown upon them; their own conscience will upbraid them; the saints will condemn them; their friends will forsake them; the angels will deride them; the devil will scoff at them; the heavens will thunder against them; earth will flame about them; hell will groan for them; and down they will go, roaring and howling forever! Why, man; there is no remedy but one, and is not that a needful remedy? Yet, by unbelief, you reject it.<sup>1</sup>

Given proper emphasis, these and like words were undoubtedly very effective, especially when the contrasting condition of believers was presented:

The believer cannot but be safe and happy; for the stroke of the sword of justice has fallen by him, and has lighted upon his surety, his shepherd: the death of the shepherd is the life of the sheep. Though the sheep may be scattered, and scarred with fatherly chastisements; yet the shepherd being smitten with the sword of vindictive justice, no stroke of judicial wrath shall ever fall upon them: for Christ has borne their griefs, and carried their sorrows, and by his stripes they are healed: and all that look to him by faith shall be healed, and saved in like manner.<sup>2</sup>

There next followed the trial or examination, by which the people could judge whether they were believers or unbelievers. The following is an instance from "Sensible Presence, Sudden Absence":

Why, how shall we know, say you, if we have met with the Lord? Or attained any thing of the enjoyment of him?

Why, in the

1. Place, you may try it by this, There are some things you will be hardly able to endure, if you have

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1. Vol. III, p. 182.

2. Vol. I, p. 45.

met with him.--The Lord's people they cannot endure that God go away from them again; or that God should hide his face....2. If you know his gracious presence, you will be one that rejoices in his presence, and laments at his absence....3. If you are one that have experience of this presence of God, and fellowship with him; then you will have some fellowship with the saints, the excellent ones of the earth....4. We may know it by the humbling effect of it....5. We may judge of it by this, They that have met with God and have his presence, whether they have it sensibly or not, they have still an high esteem of Christ, even though he should be absent....6. They have something of a tenderness of heart, that they dare not allow themselves in sin....<sup>1</sup>

Next he answered all the objections that unbelievers might bring against accepting Jesus Christ, and, finally, he made his great appeal:

Now what in the world have you to object more? Why, have you so many objections more, as you think all the ministers of earth cannot answer them? I offer you the man that is God's fellow to answer them all...I offer you the man who is God's fellow, in whose bowels the sword was bathed: and now the flaming sword that guarded the way of the tree of life is taken away, and here is the tree of life full of the apples of grace, glory, and eternal salvation; and the branches of the tree are hanging down among your hands, in the midst of the church at Dunfermline. O take, and eat, and live for ever. What say you now? I allude to the words of Jephthah, Judges 11:9, 'If I fight for you and prevail, shall I be your head?' O yes, yes, say they; so says Christ to you, If I satisfy justice for you; if I quench the flames of that fiery sword, and drown all your enemies in the red-sea, of my blood, shall I be your head? Shall he be your head, man? Shall he be your head, woman? Does your hearts say, Yes, yes? Does your hearts say, Amen, amen?...Is your heart saying, 'Gladly would I have him; gladly would I have him, that I may thus be blessed in him, and that his name may be glorified in me?' Are these the breathings of your soul? Then, upon my peril, I undertake to be the happy messenger, and tell you, in the name of the Lord, that whatever you think of your faith, and of yourselves, as the blackest monsters of sin and guilt that ever were out of hell; yet you have the

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1. Vol. VI, pp. 392-395.

faith of God's elect, and you are married and matched with the man that is God's fellow.<sup>1</sup>

John Erskine also had the gift of forceful appeal, and many of his sermons end on a very evangelical note. However, he differs from Ralph in that he has reduced the length of his appeal, omitting many unnecessary and repetitious matters. In addition, he has combined the variety of materials that Ralph presented in rather distinct sections. Due to the practical nature of some of his sermons, his primary purpose was not always to win souls to Christ. Sometimes it was to give instruction in Christian conduct. When it was this latter, his application was usually a calm, rational appeal that what had been said might be taken to heart and find expression in life. For instance,

Entertain this doctrine in a manner suitable to its nature.

It is a mystery. Affect not to be wise above what is written. Admire and adore, what thou canst not fully comprehend. Let thy understanding do homage to the Divine testimony. Receive this doctrine, not as the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the word of the living God.

It is a mystery of godliness. By indulging ease and security, while profligate and immoral, act not as if it were a mystery of iniquity. Remember that mere speculative knowledge will condemn, not save thee. Suffer the truth to have its proper and full influence on thy temper and behaviour. Adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, that they who believe not the word, may be won by thy amiable and exemplary conversation.

It is the pillar and ground of truth. Prize that gospel, which has published to thee a doctrine so transcendently glorious and important. Count all else loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. Every thing in the world, yea, the world itself, will be little and inconsiderable in thine eyes, if this mystery is seen by thee in its true greatness. Bless the Lord, who hath caused light to arise upon thee; and pity and

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1. Vol. I, pp. 56, 57.



pray for those who yet remain in darkness.<sup>1</sup>

Less calm and more worthy of a Ralph Erskine is this impassioned plea for sinners to accept the offer of Christ:

We are all of us on trial for eternity. Our eternal happiness or misery depends on our improving, or not improving the means of grace. Now, is the accepted time. Now, is the day of salvation. This favourable season, may, as to some of us, be near its period; and then, God will try us no more...Even now, the axe is laid to the root of the tree; and no careless unfruitful hearer can tell how soon it may receive a commission to strike the fatal blow. He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. Know, O sinner! a sovereign remedy for thy spiritual diseases is now in thy offer; but, if thou continue to reject it, thou must perish and pine away in thine iniquities; and, as thy sin exceeds that of the heathen, so shall thy punishment exceed theirs. If the gospel secures not thy pardon, it shall aggravate thy condemnation. If it doth not advance thee to heaven, it shall cast thee down to the very lowest hell... When thou art going out of this world, or, at the farthest, when thou art gotten into the other world; with what piercing cries, and bleeding heart, wilt thou lament thy present folly!<sup>2</sup>

After these two men, Hugh Blair seems rather dull in comparison. His appeals are very calm and intended to do anything but arouse the emotions. There is little of which he tries to convict his people, unless it is that they haven't done their best and should resolve to do better. There is hardly a mention of such things as sin, salvation, hell, damnation, and the like. A very typical concluding application is the following:

Let us then walk by faith. Let us strengthen this principle of action to the utmost of our power. Let us implore the Divine grace, to strengthen it within us more and more: That we may thence derive an antidote

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1. Vol. I, pp. 367, 368.

2. Vol. I, pp. 217, 218.

against that subtle poison, which incessant commerce with the objects of sense diffuses through our souls; that we may hence acquire purity and dignity of manners suited to our divine hopes; and undefiled by the pleasures of the world, unshaken by its terrors, may preserve to the end one constant tenour of integrity. Till at last, having, under the conduct of Christian faith, happily finished the period of discipline, we enter on that state, where a far nobler scene shall open; where eternal objects shall shine in their native splendour; where, this twilight of mortal life being past, the Sun of righteousness shall rise; and, that which is perfect being come, that which is in part shall be done away.<sup>1</sup>

But, not to do Blair an injustice, there are passages in which he almost begins to have an evangelical tone, though these are very few. For example,

You hover on the border of sin and duty. One day you read the Scriptures, you hear religious discourses, and form good resolutions. Next day you plunge into the world, and forget the serious impression, as if it had never been made. The impression is again renewed, and again effaced; and in this circle your life revolves. Is such conduct worthy of creatures endowed with intelligent powers? Shall the close of life overtake you, before you have determined how to live? Shall the day never come, that is to find you steady in your views, decided in your plans, and engaged in a course of action which your mind approves? If you wish that day ever to arrive, retirement and meditation must first bring you home to yourselves, from the dissipation in which you are now scattered; must teach you to fix such aims, and to lay down such rules of conduct as are suitable to rational and immortal beings. Then will your character become uniform and respectable. Then you may hope that your life will proceed in such a train as shall prepare you, when it is finished, for joining the society of more exalted spirits.<sup>2</sup>

### Their Style:

The most striking feature of the style with which Ralph

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1. Vol. I, pp. 105, 106.

2. Vol. I, pp. 240, 241.

Erskine composed his sermons was its force. His analogies, his comparisons, his metaphors save his discourses from being completely dull and give them a quality that makes them interesting and worth reading. He has a way of expressing himself, which, though not always exactly proper, is yet fresh and vivid and energetic.

The following examples furnish some idea of this feature of his style: "God puts some into fat pastures, that he may feed them for a day of slaughter."<sup>1</sup> "It is the Spirit of God that garnishes the soul with these spiritual embroideries."<sup>2</sup> "The self-righteous sinner is like an empty bottle filled with nothing but air."<sup>3</sup> "...our minds are become a dungeon of darkness."<sup>4</sup> "The faith of many is like the gadding hen, that carries her eggs to another but never lays them at home."<sup>5</sup> "...the ordinances are golden pipes...through which the oil of grace runs."<sup>6</sup> "The smoke of vain words and evil actions, that comes out at the chimney of your daily conversation."<sup>7</sup> Almost every page has some such figure of speech.

He does not refrain from using words and expressions, which in this twentieth century, and no doubt to many in his own day, would be regarded as unsuitable for use in the pulpit. For instance, he has expressions like these: "We are but unprofitable

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1. Vol. I, p. 417.
  2. Vol. I, p. 310.
  3. Vol. III, p. 52.
  4. Vol. I, p. 85.
  5. Vol. IV, p. 191.
  6. Vol. IV, p. 293.
  7. Vol. V, p. 8.

servants, and our righteousness is as filthy rags, a menstruous cloth."<sup>1</sup> "...they think to disgorge and vomit up all the sins of their life."<sup>2</sup> "...when he thinks on himself, it makes him loath and scunner, as it were, like a man ready to bock or vomit, when he sees some filthy nasty thing, especially among his meat."<sup>3</sup> "...sucking virtue from the breasts of the promise."<sup>4</sup>

He also included in his sermons many slang phrases and Scotticisms, which no doubt carried much force and appealed to the people to whom he spoke. From these phrases it is evident that Erskine made little attempt to purify his language, but preferred to speak to his congregation in words that they themselves used and understood. For example, "...gave him a swatch of it here."<sup>5</sup> "...not altogether to scrimp or scroof over the matter."<sup>6</sup> "...the bride may give many squint looks to her old lovers."<sup>7</sup> "...till the Lord himself give an outget."<sup>8</sup> "...we are not to unsaint them all."<sup>9</sup>

Besides this method of expressing himself, there are certain other characteristics of his style, which add force to his sermons. One of these is his habit of addressing his hearers, and this is particularly used in his applications. 'Sirs,' 'man,' 'woman,' and 'believer' are his most usual appellations.

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1. Vol. I, p. 324.
  2. Vol. II, p. 335.
  3. Vol. III, pp. 355, 356.
  4. Vol. II, p. 341.
  5. Vol. VIII, p. 84.
  6. Vol. III, p. 74.
  7. Vol. I, p. 127.
  8. Vol. I, p. 241.
  9. Vol. VI, p. 233.

Occasionally he speaks more specially to certain groups of people or to an individual, as he says, "What shall I say to you, graceless, Christless, desperate sinner?"<sup>1</sup> Or, "Now, unworthy, wretched, guilty, filthy, bloody sinner."<sup>2</sup> Or, "poor doubting soul."<sup>3</sup> Or, "poor brat of old Adam by nature."<sup>4</sup> Or, "Poor worm of yesterday's date."<sup>5</sup>

Another characteristic is his love for series of words and phrases. Almost every page has one or more of these. Sometimes there are only three in the series, sometimes eight or nine. Nouns, adjectives, prepositional phrases, clauses, all are used in this way. For example, in one place he says,

O what filthy hands are there amongst us! and much more filthy hearts! Heart-unbelief, heart-hardness, heart-enmity, heart-stupidity, heart-hypocrisy, heart-atheism, heart-deadness and indisposition, heart-wandering and wickedness, and innumerable such plagues, discover the pollution of the heart.<sup>6</sup>

Another feature is his use of questions. We have already noticed that Erskine employs such questions as What? Why? Who? When? and the like to carry along the development. But he also uses them a great deal in his application. For instance, these are a few consecutive sentences:

If you be not pleased with this sweet bargain, what in all the world will you do with your sin and guilt? Can you answer well enough for it at God's tribunal? What will you do with all your plagues and maladies? Can you heal them yourselves? What will you do with all the curses and threatenings of God's law, when grim

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1. Vol. II, p. 106.
  2. Vol. I, p. 49.
  3. Vol. I, p. 70.
  4. Vol. IV, p. 199.
  5. Vol. I, p. 196.
  6. Vol. I, p. 304.

death will stare you broad in the face, and when the last fetch of your breath shall summon you to come and answer before the tribunal of God?<sup>1</sup>

At times it seems that all he does is to ask his congregation questions.

Very closely associated with this is his use of dialogue between various persons. Often this is between himself and his listeners. But there are occasions on which he carries on imaginary conversations between perhaps God and His creatures, or God and Christ, or, depending on the sermons, God and the sword of justice, or the bride and groom. Then, too, there is monologue, in which he presents imaginary speeches by people. For instance,

Well, says Christ, it is much to bring them all back again; but I will do it, though I took them not away. I will restore to man his happiness; he has lost the favour of God, I will restore it in justification; he has lost the image of God, I will restore it, in regeneration; he has lost the fellowship of God, I will restore it, being God's Fellow.<sup>2</sup>

All of these characteristics that have been mentioned are components of Erskine's style, which gave his sermons force and energy. However, it is not to be thought that his sermons are brilliant compositions of striking expressions, forceful language, and vivid illustrations. For they are not. While such things are present and are saving factors, his style is generally dull and unattractive. His sentences are often very long and complicated with many clauses. The fol-

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1. Vol. I, p. 51.

2. Vol. I, pp. 33, 34.

lowing is not an unusual sentence, selected at random, and it will illustrate many of the faults of his style:

As the first Adam was our public federal head, and he and we included in one and the same covenant of works; so Christ the second Adam, is our public head, and the covenant of grace with him and us, is the same covenant, though he alone is the Head, Surety, and Mediator, to whom some promises and precepts are peculiar: however, he being the covenant of the people, all things promised unto, or to be performed by the people, are secured in the contract with Christ; all the condition of life to be performed is found in him; yea, he undertakes, in that covenant, the removal of all obstructions and impediments from within that would hinder their attainment of covenant-mercy, being for a light to the Gentiles, to take away the inward blindness that is found in them; so that not only all necessities for redemption, but also ~~all~~ necessities for the powerful and effectual application of that redemption, are first promised in the covenant to him, and then to us in him, upon his fulfilling the condition of perfect obedience.<sup>1</sup>

Ralph Erskine had the weakness of being unable to be brief and to the point. He allowed himself to become involved over a matter, exploring this aspect and that, until his sermons sometime become almost theological dissertations. He quoted Greek and Latin very often, though usually a translation was supplied. From the people's viewpoint, the saving feature in his sermons, as far as their understanding and ability to follow were concerned, was the fact that Erskine repeated his major themes. At times he seemed to be almost going in circles, and if a point was missed at one time, it could be picked up when he next came round to it.

In summary, it can be said that Ralph Erskine's style, on the whole, was undoubtedly dull, but at least it was refresh-

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1. Vol. I, p. 151.

ingly dull.

In considering now the style with which John Erskine wrote, there are two characteristics which it did not possess. These he himself condemns. One is a weakness of Ralph's style: "I say nothing of those, whose long perplexed periods, occasioned by unnecessary epithets and expletives, and parentheses and digressions, render their sermons at once tedious and obscure."<sup>1</sup> The other is the opposite extreme: "Their fault is...more offensive, who, by a false affectation of the elegant or the sublime, soar aloft above the comprehension of their hearers. Bombast descriptions, glittering flowers of eloquence, and luxuriant flights of wit, had better be left to the heroes of romance."<sup>2</sup> Into neither of these pitfalls did John Erskine plunge. His sentences are usually short, though there is a variety in length, and they are concerned with a single idea. There is rarely an unnecessary digression or parenthesis. He does not affect to be elegant, nor does he rise above his congregation with airy nonsense. He is direct, matter-of-fact, and easy to be understood.

In some ways his style resembles that of Ralph Erskine, for there is something of the same energy and force. But his sermons do not have that freshness of insight and expression that carried Ralph's over many dull sections. John Erskine makes infrequent use of figures of speech, but a few would

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1. Vol. I, p. 58.

2. Ibid.



equal any that Ralph employed. For instance, "The heart is a fort more easily taken by sap than by storm."<sup>1</sup> "...they were dwarfs in religion."<sup>2</sup> "Christianity loses more than she gains, when men employ, in the cause of heaven, the artillery of hell."<sup>3</sup> He also uses some slang expressions, though, in this respect, his language is much more pure. There are expressions like, "with half an eye,"<sup>4</sup> "peevishly take pet at the public,"<sup>5</sup> and "as the drop of the bucket."<sup>6</sup> He never employs any words or phrases that might seem improper to his hearers.

Like Ralph, he frequently uses series of words and phrases, and practically every page contains one. He is very fond of monologue and quite often presents imaginary speeches. He also is fond of addressing his listeners, though less frequently than Ralph. His usual appellation is, "my brethren." There are others: "O! sleeper," "my dear hearers," "O Christian," "ye that forget the Lord." His use of dialogue is almost entirely confined to answering objections that his congregation might raise.

He uses questions, particularly as a means of application, and in this he followed the same practice as Ralph. For example,

Or, do ye dream that his wrath is so easy and tolerable that ye can support yourselves under it? Can your hearts endure, or can your hands be strong, in the day when God shall deal with you? Who can stand before his indignation? Who can abide the fierceness of his anger?

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1. Vol. I, p. 53.
  2. Vol. II, p. 81.
  3. Vol. II, p. 97.
  4. Vol. I, p. 104.
  5. Vol. I, p. 134.
  6. Vol. I, p. 330.

Who can dwell with devouring flames? Who can abide with everlasting burnings?<sup>1</sup>

But, while questions form a characteristic part of his style, it is his imperative exhortations and admonitions that are the most common feature. He is continually giving directions for conduct and application. An illustration of this is as follows:

Ye who have believed unto righteousness, make confession with the mouth unto salvation. Declare your sense of the important purposes for which the Lord of life was crucified, by devoutly commemorating them at his table. Be valiant for the truth upon the earth. When truth falls in the street, resolve to fall with it rather than to renounce it. Hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering.<sup>2</sup>

In general, his style was sufficiently lucid to rule out the repetition that Ralph Erskine practiced. It was freed from most of the blunders of grammar and language that Ralph had, and certainly from all impropriety. He never used Latin or Greek terms and rarely admitted slang expressions. He had a certain energy of style, but it was not characteristic. His was a plain, matter-of-fact style, with no ornamentation, outstanding in no particular respect, but perfectly suitable as the vehicle for what he said.

As litterateur, critic, and professor of rhetoric and belles lettres, Hugh Blair had the reputation of being a paragon of style. His lectures discussed the whole matter of style,

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1. Vol. II, p. 210.

2. Vol. II, p. 300.

together with the composition of sermons, and it was undoubtedly his purpose to "practice what he preached."

His sermons are characterized by the smooth flow of carefully and properly chosen words. He seems to do everything in his power to make himself clear. His words are selected with diligent care so that the proper terms have the precise meanings he desired. When words or technical phrases might be obscure as to their significance, he clarifies them. His sentences are of sufficient length to express the idea he has in mind, and they are not encumbered with digressive phrases or parenthetical clauses. There is little need for repetition of thought as he is clear the first time, though he usually has a summary of the main ideas in the conclusion. One does not have to exercise the mind to any great extent to follow what he says.

He is most careful never to transgress good taste. There is never any of the slang which the Erskines had, and certainly nothing that could be called 'improper.' Never does he use Greek or Latin in his sermons. He took pains to purge his language of all taint of Scotland and to present the pure English.

He does not make use of questions, of dialogue and monologue, of word series, and of figures of speech to the same extent as the two Erskines. These features are naturally pres-

ent, but they are not so characteristic. However, he does frequently use series of sentences and clauses. For instance,

With the utmost attention of filial tenderness, he committed his aged mother to the care of his beloved disciple. With all the dignity of a sovereign, he conferred pardon on a penitent fellow-sufferer. With a greatness of mind beyond example, he spent his last moments in apologies and prayers for those who were shedding his blood.<sup>1</sup>

He is also given to short sentences, particularly in his descriptions and conclusions. Here is a brief example from "On the Death of Christ":

All nature seemed to feel it; and the dead and the living bore witness to its importance. The veil of the temple was rent in twain. The earth shook. There was darkness over all the land. The graves were opened, and many who slept arose, and went into the Holy City.<sup>2</sup>

Also, like John Erskine, he has many exhortations and directions in his applications, though these are typical of every portion of his sermons. The following is a part of one conclusion:

Correct, then, this ill-founded arrogance. Expect not, that your happiness can be independent of him who made you. By faith and repentance, apply to the Redeemer of the world. By piety and prayer, seek the protection of the God of heaven.<sup>3</sup>

The most usual form for his exhortations, however, is 'Let us....'

While Blair's style possesses perspicuity, purity, and propriety, its great lack is in energy and force. His sermons

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1. Vol. I, pp. 110, 111.

2. Vol. I, p. 111.

3. Vol. I, p. 310.

have little life, little change of pace. They are too soothing. Then, at times, his style seems very affected and labored. One can almost sense the struggle he has had in writing. He also appears to find a pleasure in big words and elegant phrases, and many of the latter could easily have been omitted. His sermons would have, perhaps, been less 'beautiful,' but certainly no worse for content. But, in spite of these criticisms, nicety of style is the most outstanding feature of Blair's sermons.

## CHAPTER VI

### Their Theology

When a minister begins to write a sermon, he rarely, if ever, intends to write a theological textbook, and yet theology will undoubtedly be present. For, what he himself believes, or does not believe, concerning the Christian faith will find open expression in his sermons. Those truths which he considers to be of vital importance will be emphasized and expounded, while those of lesser importance will be minimized.

But it would be an overstatement to say that the sermons of a minister will present his complete system of theology, for many ministers do not feel that every phase of their creed is 'preachable.' Some aspects that they thoroughly believe are considered too difficult or too complicated to be mentioned in their preaching, and so they neglect them altogether or tone them down almost beyond recognition. However, while a system may not be present, and probably should not be expected, there will be theological elements in every sermon worthy of the name.

In the eighteenth century, Calvinism, as expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, was the official creed of the church, both Establishment and Secession. Ministers were required to subscribe to the Confession and were no

doubt expected to preach and teach its doctrines. But Calvinism is taught with varying emphases at various periods and in the same period, and we have seen this to be true in Scotland at this time.<sup>1</sup> Many 'isms' were making their appearance to affect and modify the Calvinism of the kirk. Charges of Arianism, Arminianism, Socinianism, Quakerism, Neo-nomianism, and Anti-nomianism were frequently heard. Heresy and error were abroad in the land. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that theology held such an important place in the preaching of the more zealous and such an unimportant place in the preaching of those more averse to controversy.

The sermons of Ralph Erskine, John Erskine, and Hugh Blair, all contain theology, but in differing degrees. There is general agreement among them on certain basic points, and this is natural, since all of them may be termed 'Calvinists.' But each man had his own particular emphases, and sometimes modifications, of the official interpretation of the Confession. On some of these they agreed, and on others they differed.

It is the purpose of this chapter to present the doctrines on which they preached, mentioning such ramifications as are of importance.

### RALPH ERSKINE

Erskine himself gives what are evidently the fundamentals

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1. See above, Chapter I.

of his theology. In one of his sermons he has the following to say:

If you ask, What these fundamental truths of first principles are? Why, they are such, with respect whereunto all, that know any thing experimentally about religion, are beyond doubt: such as, that there is a God: that he is an eternal, immutable, and independent Being; hath ordained all things, executing his decrees in the works of creation and providence: that he created man after his own image: that man fell from his own happiness, and brought himself into a state of sin and misery: that God sent his Son, to take on our nature; that therein he might suffer and satisfy divine justice, pay the price of redemption; and that there is no remedy for us but in him, and by him: that to all the elect he applies this redemption, enlightening their minds in the knowledge of himself, subduing their wills; and that whom he thus regenerates and converts, he justifies, adopts, and sanctifies, giving them his Spirit to quicken them, and guide them from step to step, till he land them in glory, and they be eternally blessed in and with himself: and that all others, being left in their sins, shall be eternally damned, and destroyed with everlasting destruction, from the presence of God. These, and the like, are fundamental truths, founded upon the clearest and strongest grounds of Scripture, and linked together inseparably: and whatever doctrine or principle runs in a direct opposition to any of these, savours not of God, but of flesh and blood.<sup>1</sup>

These are his basic doctrines, and these are the doctrines that one finds stressed in his sermons. Keeping this general outline in mind, therefore, we shall enlarge upon the points of his 'sermonic' theology, proportionally to his emphasis upon them and using his own words as much as possible.

Erskine accepts the fact that there is a God and makes no attempt to prove His existence. The philosophical arguments are not mentioned.

What sort of a God is this? What is His nature? This is

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1. Vol. II, pp. 215, 216.



a question that we should not seek to answer.

If we begin to dive into that question, What think ye of God? we may soon lose ourselves, and come to the philosopher's demand of a day to answer that question, and then a week, and then a month, and then tell it is impossible to answer it: nay, we ought not to be curious in searching into the nature of God, lest we get a dash.<sup>1</sup>

The important thing for us is, not what God is absolutely or essentially, but what He is in relation to us.<sup>2</sup>

As mortal beings we can never conceive of God except as inconceivable. If we are able to master our thoughts of God, they are altogether unworthy of Him. Whatever we know of God, except we see it to be infinitely beyond our understanding, is not God nor to be worshipped as such.<sup>3</sup> There is an infinite natural distance between God the infinite and our finite selves.<sup>4</sup> In fact, there can be no greater distance conceived between anything than between the Creator and the created.<sup>5</sup>

But, if there is such a great chasm between us, how is it that we are able to know God and to find out something about Him? Because He reveals Himself to us. He does this in three ways.<sup>6</sup> First, there are the creatures that He has made. The knowledge of God we have in this way is like the knowledge we have of a man by his workmanship. When we know God by the creatures, we know that He must be great and wise and powerful. In the book of the creature we see the being of God. Secondly,

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1. Vol. IV, p. 59.  
 2. Vol. IV, pp. 59, 60.  
 3. Vol. VI, p. 477.  
 4. Vol. IV, p. 327.  
 5. Vol. I, p. 123.  
 6. Vol. IV, p. 51.

there is the Scripture. The knowledge obtained in this way is like the knowledge one gets of a famous learned man by reading what he has written. So do we conceive of God's excellency by reading the word, and in the book of the Scripture we may see the will of God. Thirdly, there is Christ. The knowledge we get by Him is like that one gets of a king by having seen his image, or rather, his son, who is as like him as he can look. Christ is the brightness of His glory, the express image of His person. He is also a book, "for he is still O LOGOS TOU THEOU, the Word of God, Rev. 19:13; but he is not made with ink and paper, he is a living book, a living picture and representative of the Father."<sup>1</sup> By these three means, then, we learn of God.

But, what do we learn of God in these ways? We discover, first of all, that God is one and yet three. That God is one needs little emphasis, for it is a commonly accepted truth, but warning should still be given against practices that seem to encourage the thought of three gods.<sup>2</sup> The object of worship is ONE, and so the object of faith. "It is a mental error to worship first one person and then another, as the Popish and Prelatical forms seem to lead unto: 'Lord have mercy on us; Christ have mercy on us,' etc.; as if there were divers objects of worship."<sup>3</sup> The proper object is not God and Christ as two, but God in Christ, and the object is one. Otherwise we worship not the true God.

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1. Vol. IV, p. 51.

2. Erskine himself encourages this thought by continually placing God and Christ over against each other.

3. Vol. VII, p. 80.

Yet it is an article of our creed that Christ is God's equal,<sup>1</sup> that there is but one God and yet three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is a oneness between them in point of nature and essence,<sup>2</sup> of essential properties (i.e. omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, unchangeableness, eternalness),<sup>3</sup> of will,<sup>4</sup> and of attributes.<sup>5</sup> With regard to essence, Christ is the same supreme, self-sufficient, self-existent, independent, invisible, and eternal God with the Father and the Holy Ghost.<sup>6</sup> Christ's divine person, absolutely considered, is equally invisible and inaccessible to us as the Father is.<sup>7</sup> Christ's works are the same in substance as the Father's, flowing from the same essence and power. He acts not as a subordinate instrument. There is a unity in the work and the manner of it. All the works proper to God are ascribed to Christ: creation, preservation, redemption, donation of the Spirit, raising Himself from the dead, the institution of offices and ordinances in His church, and judging the world.<sup>8</sup>

There is a difference, though, between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father and the Son are not one person, but two persons. So, we are not to understand their oneness in respect of personality.<sup>9</sup> They are distinct in personal properties. For it is proper to the Father to beget the Son, the Son to be be-

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1. Vol. I, p. 5.
  2. Vol. I, p. 5.
  3. Vol. I, p. 6.
  4. Vol. I, pp. 6, 166.
  5. Vol. IV, p. 334.
  6. Vol. IV, p. 338.
  7. Vol. IV, p. 352.
  8. Vol. I, p. 6.
  9. Vol. IV, p. 333.

gotten of the Father, and the Holy Ghost to proceed from both, from all eternity. The Father was not incarnate. He sent the Son.<sup>1</sup> God the Father is the first in order of subsistence, and so the first in order of operation in all things.<sup>2</sup>

Warning must be given here against error. It is

God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that is the object of religious worship; and the Unity must be worshipped in the Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity: and, when we direct our worship to any one person, we must include the rest in worship...If we worship God out of a Trinity, as the Turks; or God out of Christ, as the Jews; we worship not the true God, but an idol.<sup>3</sup>

No error is more damnable than that of denying the supreme deity of our Lord Jesus and His essential oneness and equality with the Father.<sup>4</sup> This is the sin of Jews and Mohammedans, Atheists and Deists, Socinians and Arians.<sup>5</sup> Arianism especially is a damnable blasphemy, black, pernicious, base, cursed, Christ-disparaging, and soul-damning.<sup>6</sup> Their blasphemy affirms Christ to be no more than Omoiusius patri, not Omousius: that is, like unto the Father, but not of the same essence and substance.<sup>7</sup>

From the creatures, Scripture, and Christ we may also learn some of the attributes of God. For creation exhibits His power, wisdom, and glory. When God would show His power, he created a world; when He would show His wisdom, He put it in a frame and a form that discovers vast wisdom; when He would show the glory and grandeur of His name, He made a heaven and put in it angels,

1. Vol. IV, pp. 333, 334. He says, "I hope I need not stand to enlarge upon this to you, that make use of our Catechisms, with the scripture proofs."

2. Vol. I, p. 165.

3. Vol. VII, p. 60.

4. Vol. II, p. 246; Vol. III, p. 431; Vol. IV, p. 373.

5. Vol. I, p. 232; Vol. III, pp. 156, 439; Vol. VII, p. 122.

6. Vol. I, p. 5; Vol. IV, p. 66; Vol. V, p. 41; Vol. VI, p. 87.

7. Vol. IV, p. 18.

arch-angels, principalities, and powers.<sup>1</sup> In the face of Jesus we may see manifested brightly such attributes as God's wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and grace.<sup>2</sup> From Him we learn of the great boundless, bottomless, infinite love of God.<sup>3</sup> Through Scripture we discover God's omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, unchangeableness, and eternalness. Two things are to be remembered: (1) The attributes of God, however manifold to our apprehension, are not divided. They are all one.<sup>4</sup> (2) "... there is no saving or satisfying knowledge of any property of God, but what is to be had in Christ: to see God to be a merciful, just, true, righteous, good, and holy God, is neither a saving, nor a satisfying sight; unless we see these attributes meeting in Christ for our salvation."<sup>5</sup>

About four thousand years before the coming of Christ, God executed His decrees in the work of creation by creating the world out of nothing.<sup>6</sup> His method was simply to think it into being, "for he but thought that there should be a world, and there was a world: whenever it was his mind that it should be, then it was; and whatever he thought it to be, that it was, according to his thought."<sup>7</sup> There was nothing to help or hinder Him in His creation.<sup>8</sup> In all the work of creation, though, it was only the creation of man that was attended by a particular

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1. Vol. II, p. 4.

2. Vol. I, p. 116.

3. Vol. II, p. 1.

4. Vol. II, p. 141.

5. Vol. II, p. 158.

6. Vol. II, pp. 119, 393.

7. Vol. IV, p. 56.

8. Vol. III, p. 255.

circumstance. Instead of being made only by the word without any other ceremony, there was a grand council as it were of the Trinity called.<sup>1</sup> So man's creation was of special concern.

God executes His decrees now in the work of providence, for "he that made the world by creation, doth still preserve it by providence, allotting every man his portion; and by making every man's condition in the world, best for him."<sup>2</sup>

God has absolute dominion over all His creation, especially His people.<sup>3</sup> His providential power and government extend from the king on the throne to the sparrow on the bush; from the disposing of kingdoms and scepters on the earth to the numbering of the hairs of the head.<sup>4</sup> Not a single thing can happen without His ordering and over-ruling providence.<sup>5</sup> The thoughts of men are no more free before God than their words and actions.<sup>6</sup> He even knows their thoughts before they conceive them.<sup>7</sup> But not only are all things governed in time by the workings of God's providence, but everything that happens in the world was resolved upon and decreed from all eternity that it should be as it is.<sup>8</sup>

God is the author of all things. Though natural causes may be the immediate cause, yet God is back of all secondary causes as the Chief Cause. There may be "a concatenation and chain of causes, but God is at the top of the chain."<sup>9</sup> He orders affliction and allows evil on His children.<sup>10</sup> He permits Satan to do

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1. Vol. II, p. 119.  
p. 461; Vol. IX, p. 78.

2. Vol. I, p. 291.  
4. Vol. V, p. 183.

3. Vol. VII,

5. Vol. V, p. 443.  
p. 12.

6. Vol. IV, p. 11.

7. Vol. IV,

8. Vol. IX, p. 77.

9. Vol. VII, p. 121.

10. Vol. VIII, pp. 84, 85.

his work.<sup>1</sup> And not one hair of the believer's head can be touched beyond that God gives permission.<sup>2</sup> There is an over-ruling providence making all things co-operate for the good of believers. Every circumstance of their trial, the instrument, time, place, kind, contrivance, are ordered of the Lord.<sup>3</sup> So beware of practically contradicting the design of providence in working for your good, so as to be the worse of them.<sup>4</sup>

He permits sin for His own wise ends. He "is not the author of sin, but he is the Over-ruler of the wickedness of men, to make it contribute and work together, for glory to his name, and good to his people."<sup>5</sup> The holy sovereignty of God is especially seen in this matter of the over-rule of the wicked, inexcusable actions of men. For instance, though Judas and Pilate acted most sinfully, yet it was not by chance, but by the ancient decree of God. God is able not only to govern all the natural causes in the world and order them to His own glory, but even the most corrupt and abominable actions of men, and still be free of sin. Even the devils do what God permits, really some way commissions them to do. It is no excuse to any man in a sinful course that God has a hand in everything that really comes to pass, who is yet just and holy in all.<sup>6</sup> If a man starves himself to death by refusing the means of natural life, he will be accounted a self-murderer, in spite of the abso-

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1. Vol. VIII, p. 96.      2. Vol. I, p. 226.      3. Vol. II, p. 102; Vol. VIII, p. 186; Vol. IX, p. 55.      4. Vol. IX, p. 102. This statement seems a little out of place in view of what has just been said before.      5. Vol. I, p. 229. In view of his statements on providence and foreordination, God can hardly be anything else but the author of sin.  
6. Vol. I, p. 42.

lute decree concerning the number of his days.<sup>1</sup>

While God could rule directly and immediately at all times, He has provided secondary natural causes and ordinary methods of action. "I do not limit the Lord to this way or that way: he is Sovereign: but I speak of the ordinary steps and degrees...."<sup>2</sup> God could keep us alive without food if He so desired, but He will not when He affords ordinary means. "God could bring about a reformation in Scotland without the instrumentality of any man; but he chooses to do otherwise: therefore let none say, I need not put to my hand, for God will do his work whether I meddle or not."<sup>3</sup>

What is the purpose of God in His providential government of the world? What is the chief end of God? It is to glorify Himself in all His perfections and to enjoy Himself forever.<sup>4</sup> The great end of all His works is to exalt Christ and glorify His own name.<sup>5</sup> It well becomes the Lord and only Him to commend Himself.<sup>6</sup>

God created man in His own image. When He did so, He made him capable of rational cogitation concerning God and spiritual objects, which beasts that have some sort of thoughts, yet are not capable of.<sup>7</sup> He also endowed him with a "perfect rectitude of nature, and ability sufficient to have yielded perfect obedi-

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1. Vol. IV, p. 125; Vol. VI, p. 481.

3. Vol. VIII, p. 60.

5. Vol. V, pp. 202, 293.

is given to support such statements.

2. Vol. IV, p. 459.

4. Vol. II, p. 145.

6. Vol. I, p. 143. No Scripture

7. Vol. IV, p. 8.



ence to the law," and thereby to have obtained eternal life.<sup>1</sup>  
 When man "dropt out of God's creating hands, he was like the picture of God, in a eloud."<sup>2</sup>

After having created Adam, God made with him, and federal-ly through him with his posterity, a covenant of works, that on eondition of perfect obedience he would receive eternal life. This covenant Adam was capable of keeping or breaking, and it was an eternally binding covenant.

But by eating the forbidden fruit Adam sinned, deliberately transgressing, and thus breaking the covenant of works, bringing upon himself and all his posterity forever the curse of God which was attached to the covenant as the penalty of disobedience. This first sin was in appearance but a small and little sin, the eating of a little forbidden fruit, the tasting of an apple. But though some sins are comparatively small and others greater and more heinous, yet none are really small in God's sight, for no small God has been sinned against.<sup>3</sup> What is sin after all? It is pride. It is Deicide, striking at the being of God.<sup>4</sup> It is unbelief.<sup>5</sup> It is enmity against God.<sup>6</sup> It is something so opposite to God that if the least drop of it should get into His nature, He would cease to be God.<sup>7</sup> The language of the sinner is, God is altogether such a one as myself.<sup>8</sup>

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1. Vol. III, p. 131.  
 p. 356; Vol. VI, p. 475.  
 5. Vol. III, p. 179.  
 p. 10.

2. Vol. I, p. 318.  
 4. Vol. I, p. 14.  
 6. Vol. IV, p. 376.  
 8. Vol. VII, p. 123.

3. Vol. I,  
 7. Vol. V,

By his sin Adam fell from the estate in which he was created and as our public federal head he carried all his seed with him in the fall.<sup>1</sup> By this fall the universal frame suffered a convulsion,<sup>2</sup> and Adam brought upon himself and all his posterity death of three kinds: external death, including privation of bodily life and the pains, sickness, public calamities, and personal miseries that attend the present life; internal death, meaning defilement and pollution of the soul, debasement and degradation to the rank of beasts, disorder and confusion, separation from God, loss of God's favor, image, fellowship, and communion; eternal death, meaning everlasting separation from the presence of God.<sup>3</sup> The fall was particularly serious for Adam's posterity, for suppose it were possible to live perfectly from the cradle to the grave and be as free from original sin and have as good a nature as ever Pelagius thought any had; yet the law of works is broken in Adam; in him we sinned, and that one sin is enough to damn the whole world.<sup>4</sup> Adam's sin erected a vail between man and God,<sup>5</sup> and God became an enemy and a consuming fire, a Judge and an Avenger, a provoked God and an angry Deity, whose anger burns to the lowest hell.<sup>6</sup> Thus man fell into a terrible state because of what Adam did.

Had Adam been obedient he would have had children after God's image, but having fallen he begat a son in his own image,

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1. Vol. I, p. 145.

2. Vol. I, p. 33.

3. Vol. V,

p. 28; Vol. VI, p. 325; Vol. VII, pp. 89, 139.

4. Vol. II, pp. 319, 320.

5. Vol. I, p. 84.

6. Vol. I, p. 46; Vol. IV, pp. 59, 353; Vol. VIII, p. 22.

a polluted child.<sup>1</sup> So we come defiled into the world; we are conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity; we are born enemies to God, slaves of Satan, and heirs of hell.<sup>2</sup> By imputation we have imputed original sin, which is the guilt of Adam's first sin. Also, by derivation from Adam, we have inherent original sin, which is the total want of original righteousness and the corruption of our whole nature. All are guilty and filthy by nature before ever they are capable of actual sin. The most innocent-like children that are born are nothing but a generation of vipers by nature.<sup>3</sup> If one says he is as pure as the day he was born, he has no purity at all.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, at the very beginning we are totally depraved and incapable of any spiritual good. We are cursed and condemned to die eternally.

Though the precept of doing is broken, yet the requirement of a perfect righteousness still stands. The obligation to obey the law perfectly is eternal and unchangeable, written upon our hearts.<sup>5</sup> Thus in addition to the sin that is ours through nature, we increase our guilt by our own transgression of the law, sinning daily in thought, word, and deed.<sup>6</sup> "Every man, of himself, drinks in iniquity like water."<sup>7</sup> These sins of ours are part of the curse pronounced against Adam, for the greatest evil that heaven could invent was the punishing of sin with sin.<sup>8</sup> Being both finite and sinful creatures, we can never give the

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1. Vol. I, pp. 297, 299.

3. Vol. V, pp. 61, 62.

p. 268; Vol. I, p. 147.

7. Vol. VIII, p. 494.

2. Vol. I, p. 11; Vol. VII, p. 223.

4. Vol. I, p. 310.

5. Vol. II,

6. Vol. V, pp. 6-9; Vol. II, p. 280.

8. Vol. V, pp. 120, 121.

infinite and sinless satisfaction required by the law.<sup>1</sup> We are forever incapable of that life of which Adam was capable before the fall.<sup>2</sup>

Indwelling sin and corruption, darkness and ignorance, enmity to God and unbelief are whole and entire.<sup>3</sup> The sin of our nature spreads over all our faculties.<sup>4</sup> Man is rejected of God. He has forsaken God, and God has forsaken him.<sup>5</sup>

So we have brought ourselves into a most lamentable state by sin and are irrecoverably lost as to all that we can do to help ourselves spiritually.<sup>6</sup> We neither do, nor can, perceive the things of God.<sup>7</sup> By nature we are as ignorant and brutish in the things of God as the beasts that perish.<sup>8</sup> We are completely destitute of all spiritual wisdom, and all the light of nature, reason, education, literature, all the knowledge of all that is knowable, all birth and breeding, wit and wealth, honor and grandeur are of no avail for our spiritual good.<sup>9</sup> Man is so helpless that if God would give him a heaven, a paradise, a Christ, for one thought, he could not command it. He cannot believe, repent, pray, or mortify sin of himself. Let people talk of man's power as they will, but they lay aside the Bible which is full of argument to the contrary.<sup>10</sup> We may as soon expect a dead corpse to rise of itself and do the natural actions of life as to expect that we may rise and act spiritually

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1. Vol. I, p. 147.  
p. 102; Vol. II, p. 280.  
5. Vol. III, p. 308.  
7. Vol. I, p. 359.  
pp. 87, 271, 322.

2. Vol. II, p. 286.  
4. Vol. I, p. 361.  
6. Vol. I, p. 176; Vol. VIII, p. 398.  
8. Vol. II, p. 218.  
10. Vol. I, pp. 404, 405.

3. Vol. I,  
9. Vol. I,

before we be in Christ.<sup>1</sup> We may do things naturally and materially good, but we have no capacity for spiritual good.<sup>2</sup> In fact, people may even have some common influences of the Holy Spirit. Understandings may be enlightened, wills renewed towards many good purposes and resolutions, and affections touched.<sup>3</sup> Men may have excellent gifts, common graces, and high attainments, but these are not living unto God.<sup>4</sup> Men may not be drunkards, swearers, adulterers, rude debauched persons, but yet be grossly ignorant of spiritual matters.<sup>5</sup> However, even the heathen have enough common notions of God as to render them inexcusable.<sup>6</sup>

Not only are we unable to help ourselves spiritually, but everything we do is abominable in the sight of God. A man can do no holy act, and his work only pollutes him more and more.<sup>7</sup> All our actions, whether natural, civil, or religious, are vile and abominable in the sight of God.<sup>8</sup> Even the very plowing of the wicked is sin.<sup>9</sup> Our prayers are an abomination and like the howling of a dog.<sup>10</sup> We are nothing but sin and have nothing but sin and can do nothing but sin and deserve nothing but hell.<sup>11</sup> If ever we do anything acceptable in God's sight, it is grace that does it in us.<sup>12</sup> Thus the depravity of man is 'totally total.'

However, the fact of the matter is that God never designed

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1. Vol. II, p. 303.      2. Vol. VIII, p. 436.      3. Vol. I, p. 311.  
 4. Vol. II, p. 287.      5. Vol. III, p. 229.  
 6. Vol. II, p. 284.      7. Vol. II, p. 298.      8. Vol. I, p. 317; Vol. III, p. 193.  
 9. Vol. I, p. 383; Vol. VIII, p. 398.  
 10. Vol. I, p. 383; Vol. VI, p. 175.  
 11. Vol. V, p. 415.      12. Vol. I, p. 214.

to save any man by a covenant of works, but rather by man's fall to take occasion to glorify His grace.<sup>1</sup> In His infinite wisdom God resolved that in the weakness of our nature He should perfect His own strength and get the greater glory.<sup>2</sup> He foresaw in His eternal decree of permitting the fall, the ruin of mankind by the breach and violation of the covenant of works, but He graciously decided in His sovereign will not to proceed against all mankind according to the demerit of their transgression. Instead He set on foot a better project, for God's heart was set upon a reconciliation between Himself and us.<sup>3</sup> So, in the council of peace in heaven when the question came to the vote, Save them or damn them? Christ voted, and damnation was prevented from carrying the day.<sup>4</sup> For if Christ had not engaged Himself, none of Adam's posterity could have or would have approached God.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, a covenant of redemption was drawn up between the Son and the Father, wherein Christ undertook to be our surety, to fulfil for us the condition of the covenant of works, to obey the law, to satisfy God's justice, and to bear God's wrath.<sup>6</sup> All things regarding the reconciliation were determined, and this before the foundation of the world and before the people had a being.<sup>7</sup> It was determined what Christ would suffer, what price Jehovah would have, and what sacrifice would be ac-

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1. Vol. IV, p. 110; Vol. II, p. 390.

2. Vol. I, p. 12.

3. Vol. I, pp. 88, 148, 149, 167, 187.

4. Vol. VII, p. 281.

5. Vol. II, p. 366.

6. Vol. I, p. 4.

7. Vol. I, p. 167.

accepted from Christ's hands.<sup>1</sup> Thus Christ was slain before the foundation of the world, not actually, but formally.<sup>2</sup>

What was the motive that moved God to devise this plan whereby some of mankind were to be saved? It was certainly nothing from without or in us. For God had no need of us, and though all mankind had been drowned in the flood of His wrath forever, He would have lost nothing and been as infinitely happy as ever.<sup>3</sup> The motive that moved Him was even His own love and mercy. For damnation is an act of justice that our sin obliges Him to do, but salvation is purely an act of mercy that He is under no obligation to do.<sup>4</sup> There is no reason for God's love but because He loves.<sup>5</sup> Love was the motive that led Christ to engage in the covenant. Love brought Him out of heaven. Love nailed Him to a cross. Love laid Him in a grave. Love made Him rise and mount up to heaven. Herein is the infinite love of God manifested in giving His own Son as a Redeemer.<sup>6</sup> This love is a fit subject for wonder.

His being the person ordaining imports the Father's zealous concern for the salvation and redemption of men.<sup>7</sup> He bore an equal burden in the work.<sup>8</sup> Let not our notions of God be so gross as to think that the Father is of an implacable nature, full of severity, and that the Son only is of a pleasant, meek nature, full of lenity towards sinners. The Father was the one

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1. Vol. I, p. 31.  
p. 374; Vol. I, p. 169.  
5. Vol. II, p. 3.  
7. Vol. I, p. 165.

2. Vol. I, p. 28.  
4. Vol. VII, p. 167.  
6. Vol. I, pp. 130, 131.  
8. Vol. I, p. 214.

3. Vol. II,

who made the motion concerning man's redemption. We make a mistake if we think that Christ purchases and prays for the Father's love. It was the Father's love that sent Christ. So we misplace our love if we love not the Father as well as the Son.<sup>1</sup>

But because God would not show mercy to the prejudice of His justice, it was necessary that Christ come to earth in the form of God-man, to be the Mediator between God and men.<sup>2</sup> Man's sin had aroused the infinite justice of God, and that justice must be satisfied. Infinite punishment could only be given to a person of infinite value.<sup>3</sup> So the Redeemer had to be God. The Redeemer also had to be able to go through all the difficulties that lay in the way of redemption, and the weakest of these was too strong for human nature.<sup>4</sup> Also the very dignity of the work required that the Redeemer be God.<sup>5</sup> In addition, since our Redeemer was to make a covenant with God for us, it was necessary that He should be at the making of it and know the depths of God's counsels and perfectly know whom He was to satisfy and upon what conditions.<sup>6</sup> But, most of all, when all the world of men, angels, creatures was weighed in the balance of divine justice, they were found too light to counterpoise it or give satisfaction to it. It cost more to redeem a soul than all they were worth. And though they had been damned to hell

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1. Vol. I, pp. 144, 177; Vol. II, p. 4.

pp. 4, 18. 3. Vol. I, pp. 7, 8, 84.

5. Vol. I, p. 8.

6. Vol. I, p. 8.

2. Vol. IX,

4. Vol. I, p. 8.



for all eternity, it could not have repaired the honor of God for one sin.<sup>1</sup>

The Redeemer must also be man. This was necessary to fulfil the promise that the seed of the woman would be sent. Justice demanded that the same nature that sinned should be punished. God allowed the change of persons, but He would not allow a change of nature. If the Redeemer had been merely God, He could not have shed His blood, He could not have died, He would have had no soul to offer.<sup>2</sup> Thus the Redeemer must be God and man, infinite and finite.<sup>3</sup>

This union of God and man in Jesus Christ is an unspeakable mystery.<sup>4</sup> It is difficult to explain. It is the hypostatical union of two natures in one person.<sup>5</sup> The human nature of Christ is not a person distinct from the divine, though the natures are distinct.<sup>6</sup> As a man Christ had a will distinct from His will as God, and so diverse from His Father's will, though yet He did always act in subordination to His Father's will.<sup>7</sup>

He was fully God.<sup>8</sup> For even when He became man, His essential glory was never diminished. Being God, He was as happy and blessed on the cross and in the grave as ever He was. His divine nature was never reached nor reachable.<sup>9</sup> Immutability as attributed to Christ is properly meant of His divine nature, which was nowise affected by His assuming the human nature; for

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1. Vol. I, p. 34; Vol. IV, p. 40.

3. Vol. I, p. 149.

p. 151.

p. 336.

6. Vol. IV, p. 19.

8. Vol. VII, p. 79.

2. Vol. I, pp. 12, 13.

4. Vol. I, p. 149.

5. Vol. II,

7. Vol. I, p. 6; Vol. IV,

9. Vol. I, p. 31.

He became man, not by conversion of the Godhead into the flesh, but by taking the manhood into God. So He remained in His divine nature when He was incarnate the very same He was before--without addition, diminution, or alteration.<sup>1</sup> In one respect Christ was never out of heaven, for when He was on earth, He calls Himself the Son of man which is in heaven.<sup>2</sup>

Christ was also fully man. He took not on Himself our nature in its prime and glory, but after it was broken and shattered by the fall.<sup>3</sup> He was hungry, thirsty, weary, tempted, in every way distressed. He had a true body and a reasonable soul. His body was nailed to the cross. The nails pierced His hands and feet. His soul was exceeding sorrowful. He went through all the ages of man. He ate His bread by the sweat of His brow. He actually died.<sup>4</sup> But there was nothing of original or actual sin in Him.<sup>5</sup> He had no sin naturally imputed to Him, because He was never federally in Adam, so as to be liable to the imputation of his sin as we are who descend from him by natural generation. If Adam had stayed in innocency, Christ had not been incarnate to have been a Mediator for sinners. Therefore, in that capacity He was not federally in Adam, though He was in Adam in a natural sense. Besides, He had no sin personally inherent. The pollution of our nature was prevented in Him from the instant of His conception. His was an immacu-

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1. Vol. VIII, p. 164.

2. Vol. IX, p. 338.

3. Vol. I, p. 22.

4. Vol. I, pp. 11, 22.

5. Vol. I, p. 11.

late conception, for the portion whereof He was made of woman was sanctified by the Holy Ghost, so that He was naturally clean as a man.<sup>1</sup> Christ's human nature could not but be holy by the union of the divine with it.<sup>2</sup> He brought no sin with Him into the world, and all the devils could not make Him sin.<sup>3</sup>

How greatly was Christ thus humbled! God's fellow, and yet a babe, a servant, a sufferer.<sup>4</sup> He wonderfully emptied himself of His divine glory.<sup>5</sup>

So Jesus Christ came into the world. He was born of a virgin by supernatural conception of the Holy Spirit.<sup>6</sup> He was anointed above measure with the Spirit,<sup>7</sup> and was thereby enabled to carry out His work. He lived a sinless life, offering perfect obedience to the covenant of works, and thereby leaving us an example and pattern of holiness.<sup>8</sup> But both His birth and His life were directed towards that important event--His death. Was His death necessary? Was it not enough for God to become man, a creature, to be hungry and weary and reproached? No, says God, I will never be satisfied for the sins of the human race till I see my Son lying a sacrifice, bleeding at my feet.<sup>9</sup> Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, no satisfaction to justice, no real satisfaction to God, no salvation to the sinner.<sup>10</sup> If Christ had not died, our sins would never have been expiated, our Judge never atoned, and we had all

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1. Vol. VIII, p. 458.

2. Vol. VIII, p. 458.

3. Vol. I,

p. 11.

4. Vol. I, p. 7.

5. Vol. IV, p. 17.

6. Vol. I, p. 10; Vol. III, p. 291; Vol. VII, p. 72.

7. Vol. I, p. 168; Vol. VI, p. 437.

8. Vol. I, p. 315.

9. Vol. VIII, p. 135.

10. Vol. I, p. 24.

been weeping in hell.<sup>1</sup>

Christ, on the cross, shows God's hatred against sin, and at the same time His love for sinners.<sup>2</sup> For Christ was not a private, but a public person, representing all His people.<sup>3</sup> He was a surety, substituting in our place, to pay the whole debt.<sup>4</sup> He had taken upon Himself the curse denounced upon mankind at the fall of Adam.<sup>5</sup> He had the guilt of the whole world lying upon Him,<sup>6</sup> and on the cross He bore all that the elect could never bear.<sup>7</sup> His death was the finishing stroke of that obedience by which He at once fulfilled the covenants of works and grace.<sup>8</sup> And in His death all the attributes of God are glorified to the highest.<sup>9</sup>

What were the effects of Christ's death? And what was its significance? By it justice was satisfied, wrath appeased, sin expiated, God atoned, death vanquished, hell quenched, heaven purchased, and the devil's kingdom destroyed.<sup>10</sup> The power of sin was broken fundamentally, and the Spirit was purchased again, after His departure from Adam at the fall.<sup>11</sup> The elect were purchased. For in the covenant of redemption made with Christ, it was provided that some of mankind, as His seed, should be rewarded with eternal life upon condition of His perfect obedience and death.<sup>12</sup> The elect's debts were paid for to the last farthing that could be demanded.<sup>13</sup> By His death Christ restores

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1. Vol. I, pp. 32, 77.

2. Vol. I, p. 302; Vol. V, p. 11.

3. Vol. VII, p. 297.

4. Vol. II, p. 130.

5. Vol. I,

p. 21.

6. Vol. I, p. 32.

7. Vol. I, p. 23.

8. Vol. I, p. 33.

9. Vol. I, pp. 34-36.

10. Vol. IV,

p. 21.

11. Vol. I, pp. 37, 87.

12. Vol. I, pp. 149-

151, 315.

13. Vol. II, p. 135; Vol. I, pp. 23, 27.

all that was lost by the fall. He restores to man his happiness, his communion and fellowship and favor with God. He restores the lost image of God in him.<sup>1</sup> The shed blood of Christ speaks peace and reconciliation with God, washing away all impurity, uncleanness, and sin from mankind, fundamentally, but not actually.<sup>2</sup>

The death of Christ is the very foundation of our holy religion and the ground of all our hope and immortality.<sup>3</sup> Thus let Socinians be condemned who say that God was never alienated from man and that God out of His mere bounty, without any intervening satisfaction, pardons sins.<sup>4</sup> Why would there ever have been an atonement if it was not to avert the wrath revealed from heaven against ungodliness? In vain did Christ die if without the shedding of blood there was remission of sins.<sup>5</sup>

However, our atonement was perfectly made only upon Christ's going into heaven. The work of redemption was not perfectly completed upon the cross. The blood had to be carried into the holy of holies. In heaven itself Christ finished the atonement. Though He did not personally ascend to heaven till forty days after His death, He immediately acquired the right to enter and had a virtual admission, for His entrance began in His death.<sup>6</sup>

While the death of Christ satisfied justice and atoned for the sins of the elect, His death and the benefits derived from it must be applied to man, in order that man might be justified

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1. Vol. I, pp. 33, 34.  
 3. Vol. IV, pp. 350, 351.  
 p. 60; Vol. VII, p. 122.  
 6. Vol. I, pp. 82, 90, 91.

2. Vol. I, pp. 36, 38.  
 4. Vol. I, p. 46; Vol. IV,  
 5. Vol. I, p. 46.

before God and restored to fellowship with Him. What must a man do to make effectual the death of Christ? He must have faith.<sup>1</sup>

What is faith? There are many definitions and many aspects of faith, all of them true and all valuable in the understanding of it. Faith is belief in Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> It is coming to God through Jesus.<sup>3</sup> It is the beholding and acquiescing in the sacrifice of Jesus upon the cross.<sup>4</sup> It is changing rooms with Christ<sup>5</sup> and relying wholly upon Him.<sup>6</sup> It is receiving Christ personally as Lord and King.<sup>7</sup> It is consenting that Christ perform all the work and take all the glory.<sup>8</sup> It is saying Amen to God's offer and receiving and resting upon Christ alone for salvation as He is offered to us in the gospel.<sup>9</sup> It is looking for acceptance with God only in the righteousness of Christ.<sup>10</sup> It is not a mere notional persuasion or dogmatic opinion concerning Christ. It is rather such a knowledge of Him as leads the soul to an assured confidence in Him. Neither is it just an act of the will, as some would make it, thus excluding persuasion, but as Scripture says, it is an act of the whole soul, understanding, will, and affections.<sup>11</sup> It is venturing our soul, our life, upon the blood of Christ and upon the promise of God in Christ.<sup>12</sup> However, faith lies not in a single act. If you would be very sure of Christ, you should believe in Him every day.<sup>13</sup>

There is a mighty bias, though, in man's heart to seek

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1. Vol. I, p. 169.                      2. Vol. I, p. 3.                      3. Vol. I, p. 8.  
 4. Vol. I, pp. 45, 46, 53, 126.                      5. Vol. I, p. 49.  
 6. Vol. I, p. 52.                      7. Vol. III, pp. 31, 37.  
 8. Vol. I, pp. 55, 116, 117; Vol. IV, p. 96.                      9. Vol. I, pp. 181, 182.  
 10. Vol. I, p. 48.                      11. Vol. I, p. 116; Vol. III, pp. 21, 22, 31, 102, 256.  
 12. Vol. I, pp. 87, 101, 301; Vol. III, p. 24; Vol. V, p. 415.  
 13. Vol. V, p. 489.

righteousness by his own works,<sup>1</sup> and this tendency to Arminianism is natural to all. We hope that either by our natural abilities, common graces, or beautiful performances we can help ourselves out of the horrible pit. We try to make our works our righteousness and to pacify God with them.<sup>2</sup> But our righteousness is good for nothing.<sup>3</sup> We can do nothing to help ourselves. Yea, as much as we can do, and that is nothing.<sup>4</sup> There is no place for the casualty, conditionality, instrumentality of works on our part.<sup>5</sup> The only proper condition is the obedience and death of Christ.<sup>6</sup> That gospel repentance or any part of actual sanctification is necessary before and in order to justification and pardon cannot be maintained without running into the Roman camp and fighting with popish weapons.<sup>7</sup> Also false is the Baxterian scheme that says God has made a new law with mankind, and that obedience to this new law is our righteousness, giving us a title to heaven, to pardon, and to Christ's blood.<sup>8</sup>

Our faith is not to be considered as a work done by us, but only as an instrument to receive the things promised.<sup>9</sup> While it seems that the promise is conditional upon believing, yet actually believing is a part of the promise.<sup>10</sup> It is the grace by which we have access to God. It is the means by which we have salvation.<sup>11</sup> Faith itself is not necessary to salvation as a

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1. Vol. III, p. 131.

2. Vol. I, pp. 431, 453.

3. Vol. IX, p. 275.

4. Vol. I, p. 194.

5. Vol. III,

p. 362.

6. Vol. IV, p. 128.

7. Vol. II, p. 35; Vol. I,

p. 47.

8. Vol. II, p. 333.

9. Vol. IV, p. 187.

10. Vol. IV, p. 128.

11. Vol. VIII, p. 125.

moral condition, but only as a physical instrument.<sup>1</sup> It is not our faith, or receiving of Christ, that saves us, but Christ received by faith.<sup>2</sup> If a man makes faith itself the matter of his justification, he does nothing but turn it into a covenant of works.<sup>3</sup>

But if faith is the means, on man's part, of restoring the broken relationship, how does he come to get this faith? One thing is certain: he cannot obtain it of himself.<sup>4</sup> It is not a natural thing, for he has neither the will nor the power.<sup>5</sup> A natural man can gather together all the motives and arguments of the Bible, but he cannot make his own heart believe or receive Christ.<sup>6</sup>

So if man cannot come to faith of himself and his own natural endowments, the source of faith must be God. It is only when God Himself sends in a beam of light upon the heart and gives the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ that faith is created.<sup>7</sup> The taking-hand of faith always presupposes the giving-hand of God.<sup>8</sup> The power of the Spirit creates faith where it is not, and divine power must be exerted to every act of faith, since only that can make a man believe.<sup>9</sup> The meaning of the prophet's words: 'to them that turn' is, He will come and turn them.<sup>10</sup> It is no easy matter to convert a sinner, and no thanks to free will. For man once had free will

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1. Vol. V, p. 321.      2. Vol. III, p. 122.      3. Vol. II, p. 276.  
 4. Vol. I, p. 139.      5. Vol. I, p. 55.  
 6. Vol. III, p. 195.      7. Vol. I, p. 98; Vol. IV, p. 411.  
 8. Vol. III, p. 9; Vol. V, p. 16.      9. Vol. IV, pp. 91, 145; Vol. III, p. 17.  
 10. Vol. IV, p. 199.



both to good and to evil, while in his state of innocence. But now in his corrupt state he has free will only to evil.<sup>1</sup> Therefore it is that none will embrace the promise till the promise embrace them.<sup>2</sup> Therefore it is that when God comes to convert a soul, there is resistance against grace present, and the grace of Christ must conquer the soul.<sup>3</sup> There is a power in God's love that conquers and captivates man so that he cannot but believe. There is no standing before it. It is irresistible.<sup>4</sup> God thus draws sinners to Himself in a powerful, irresistible manner, and yet not violating the will as Arminians dream, but with loving and rational arguments, conquering and overpowering the soul.<sup>5</sup> Every believer finds that as it is impossible to believe till power comes, so it is impossible not to believe.<sup>6</sup>

How does God set about to create this faith in man? What are the means which He ordinarily uses to work it? Some of them are: preaching of the word, reading of the Scripture, meditation, prayer, conversation with the godly, and self-examination.<sup>7</sup> Though the natural use of means and God's saving grace have no connection, yet there is far less connection between that grace and the neglect of means. They that wilfully neglect means are so far out of God's way that they are excluding themselves.<sup>8</sup> The poor beggar that keeps to the wayside where the king passes is certainly wiser and nearer to his purpose than the man who

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1. Vol. VII, p. 151. See further, on freedom of the will, p. 198.  
 2. Vol. IV, pp. 139, 276. 3. Vol. III, p. 255.  
 4. Vol. II, p. 32; Vol. V, p. 178. 5. Vol. III, p. 299.  
 6. Vol. III, p. 437. 7. Vol. III, p. 195; Vol. V, p. 248.  
 8. Vol. III, p. 467; Vol. IV, p. 125.

goes up to a distant mountain where the king never passes.<sup>1</sup> So be restless in the use of means and neglect no commanded duty or ordinance wherein the Lord is customarily to be found.<sup>2</sup>

These means are the occasions God ordinarily uses for working faith, but in creating faith there is a general process He uses, through which saving faith is brought about subjectively. First of all, a man gets a deep sense of sin. He sees the law in all of its righteousness and recognizes how greatly he has broken it and how completely unable he is to perform its requirements.<sup>3</sup> He disclaims all hope of being justified by the law or his own works. He renounces every duty of his own as a means of obtaining life and salvation.<sup>4</sup> He is humbled to the point where he says that God will be just and righteous though He should damn him and send him to the bottom of hell, and if such a dog as himself gets a crumb from God, it will be a miracle of mercy.<sup>5</sup> Some have more, some less, of this law-work, but all of the children of faith have a measure of conviction and concern about their lost state by nature.<sup>6</sup>

Next there comes a view of the glory of Christ, for in God's method of working effectually on the hearts of sinners, a discovery of sin goes before a discovery of Christ.<sup>7</sup> Christ appears in all His excellency and glory.<sup>8</sup> We cannot explain what we see in this view of Christ. Words cannot represent the glory

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1. Vol. IX, p. 315.

Vol. VIII, p. 398.

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Vol. IV, pp. 140-142.

7. Vol. V, p. 246.

2. Vol. VI, p. 426; Vol. IV, p. 37;

3. Vol. III, p. 10; Vol. II, pp. 279-

4. Vol. I, pp. 134, 156.

6. Vol. I, p. 126; Vol. III, p. 125.

8. Vol. I, p. 126.

and beauty we see in Him. They that see Him can say no more than that they see Him.<sup>1</sup> It is an internal revelation of Christ by the Holy Spirit. It is not a light without presented to the bodily eye, like that wherewith some poor ignorant creatures are deceived, who speak of having seen about them or in such a part of the room, or of the bed, a strange light or a pleasant representation. Christ Himself is not now to be seen in any other way than by the eye of faith, in the light of internal saving manifestation by the Spirit, and so these external manifestations are evidently delusive, especially when there is nothing but gross darkness and ignorance in the mind. It is a light within, but not an enthusiastical light, making impression upon the fancy, but it is a light irradiating the whole soul.<sup>2</sup> It is no imaginary idea of Christ as a man, but it is as according to Scripture an intellectual apprehension of Him as God-man, a spiritual view of the glory of God in Christ.<sup>3</sup>

This manifestation of Christ's glory does enlighten the mind and spirit, and immediately grace upon the will draws out the whole heart after Him.<sup>4</sup> This revelation works faith and love and repentance. It works sanctification, for the power of natural enmity is broken, the soul is enlightened, transformed, and spiritualized, and a new quality and disposition brought in. A new heart is given, and the will and affections renovated. The image of God is restored, with the exception of the perfection of

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1. Vol. VII, p. 202.

2. Vol. II, pp. 218-221; Vol. III, p. 345; Vol. VI, p. 378.

3. Vol. IX, p. 336; Vol. VIII, p. 334.

4. Vol. I, p. 126.

mind and will. In the order of nature the revelation is first, but in the order of time the revelation is given and the spiritual disposition wrought simultaneously.<sup>1</sup>

Above all, though, this revelation of Christ brings about a union of man with Him, a close union through faith. This union is a great mystery. It is not lessened because Christ is in heaven and we are upon earth, but it is not as great or intimate as it would be if we were in the same place.<sup>2</sup> Union with Christ's person is the foundation of true communion with Him in all His benefits. For in this union a man gets pardon of all sins, peace and reconciliation with God, grace, the Holy Spirit, adoption, the promise of a right and title to eternal glory.<sup>3</sup> By this union a man becomes justified before God, as Christ's righteousness is imputed to him. Just as the sun shining through a blue or green glass transmits that color to the wall, though it is not the color of the wall, so the blood and righteousness of Christ are transferred to us.<sup>4</sup> This union makes us spiritually and mystically one with Him.<sup>5</sup>

This process of effectual calling, whereby faith and its fruits are worked in a man, is instantaneous. There is a set moment for Christ's coming to His people, and for this they are to wait. When that moment comes, there is a conjunction of all circumstances to conclude the work. Conscience begins to work, the word is made lively, and the Spirit acts powerfully.<sup>6</sup> The

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1. Vol. II, pp. 227-232; Vol. I, pp. 360, 361; Vol. VI, p. 335.

2. Vol. I, p. 124; Vol. VII, p. 187.

3. Vol. III, pp. 34,

98. 4. Vol. VIII, p. 477.

5. Vol. VIII, p. 126.

6. Vol. I, p. 128.

time is so precise that though every convert may not know the day of his first conversion, yet with respect of all adults it may be known, for none are converted sleeping or in a dream.<sup>1</sup>

However, it is only to the elect, not to all men, that the benefits of redemption are applied. The covenant of redemption provided for the recovery of some from their state of sin and death.<sup>2</sup> From all eternity God made choice of these elect ones out of the fallen mass of mankind.<sup>3</sup> The names of these elect are written in heaven in God's secret purpose, and thus they were chosen long before they were born.<sup>4</sup>

But if faith is of God and God has elected certain ones to be saved, the question arises as to the basis of God's choice. Why are these saved and others not? Why should He have fixed on this particular person and passed by millions of others from whom he differed not by nature? Upon what condition do we have God's love and favor?

There is no condition, for God's choice is not on account of any merit or worth in the creatures He chooses. If a man was worthy, salvation would not be the free gift it is. Sovereign grace is not moved by any goodness in the creature nor hindered by any evil.<sup>5</sup> The best saints on earth cannot deserve mercy, for the salvation of the most righteous is of grace.<sup>6</sup> The elect are children of wrath, even as others, by nature, whatever they are by divine destination. None are called because of any good

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1. Vol. VII, p. 199.

2. Vol. I, pp. 35, 148.

3. Vol. II, p. 60.

4. Vol. I, p. 157; Vol. IV, p. 133.

5. Vol. I, p. 391; Vol. III, p. 210.

6. Vol. V, p. 316.

work, sanctity, or blamelessness in themselves.<sup>1</sup> We must not think that outward things such as wisdom, learning, or worldly advantages move God to set His love upon any.<sup>2</sup>

It is also dishonoring for any to think that election and adoption are according to God's foreknowledge of our faith and obedience. For thus would we elect ourselves and be children not by divine promise but of our own free will and faith. God foresaw, indeed, the faith of the elect because He first decreed to give the grace of faith to them. The foreknowledge of things to come to pass depends upon a precedent will in God. Nothing comes to pass without His will. The friends and favorites of the free will of man in converting himself are enemies to the grace of God. Neither does this abolish the freedom of the will. For as the generative promise is just the absolute will of God, so the determination of man's will by the will of God is the liberty of the will and not the bondage of it.<sup>3</sup> Let this rank Arminianism be rejected that says God saves on account of foreseen faith and good works, for the word of God says otherwise.<sup>4</sup> Arminianism is to be put aside, because it robs Christ of His free grace in electing from eternity and effectually calling in time by ascribing so much to man's free will.<sup>5</sup>

Men may rack their wits and dispute about the reason of God's election, but there would be more calm reasoning about gospel truths if we submitted to the truth of the sovereignty of

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1. Vol. II, pp. 7, 178.

2. Vol. II, p. 9.

3. Vol. IV,

pp. 215, 216.

4. Vol. V, p. 304; Vol. II, p. 12.

5. Vol. VII, p. 122.

free grace and stooped to this: He wills because He wills.<sup>1</sup> It is of God's own sovereign will and good pleasure. He has power over all souls on earth both to save and to damn them, and He can send them where He will.<sup>2</sup> In the end, the question of why He saves one and not another must be resolved into divine unaccountable sovereignty.<sup>3</sup>

Since Christ had the guilt of the whole world lying upon Him,<sup>4</sup> since He is the Savior of the whole world,<sup>5</sup> and since election is based upon no terms or conditions on man's part, therefore, the offer of salvation is to be made to all men. "I am warranted to preach this gospel to every creature: there is no rational creature within these walls, that stands in need of salvation, but you have it, unless you wilfully reject it."<sup>6</sup> If a man be in a sinful condition, in a lost condition, that is all the condition and qualification necessary for making an offer of Christ as a Savior to him.<sup>7</sup> The gospel would not be good news to all people if any sinner were excluded.<sup>8</sup> Besides the unpardonable sin there is no disease outside the Mediator's commission.<sup>9</sup> Let them straighten the gospel who will, they do so at their own peril. Our commission is wide and full.<sup>10</sup>

If any clog the gospel offer with legal terms and conditions, they encroach upon the warrant that ministers have to offer Christ to all, and the warrant all have to receive Him.<sup>11</sup>

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1. Vol. I, p. 172.

2. Vol. V, pp. 183, 185.

3. Vol. VIII, p. 7.

4. Vol. I, p. 32.

5. Vol. III,

p. 36.

6. Vol. I, p. 51.

7. Vol. I, p. 173; Vol. III,

pp. 9-12; Vol. IV, p. 161; Vol. VIII, p. 141.

8. Vol. VII,

p. 404.

9. Vol. III, p. 316.

10. Vol. I, p. 159;

Vol. III, p. 24.

11. Vol. I, p. 173.

Let Arminians maintain at their peril their universal redemption, but we must maintain at our peril the universal offer.<sup>1</sup> God commands all to believe, and He mocks none. For all that do believe shall certainly be saved.<sup>2</sup> None of all that hear this gospel may look upon themselves as shut out.<sup>3</sup>

But how can this doctrine of particular election agree with the universal offer and promise? And how is it evident that God deals fairly with men in this matter? Why He plainly tells us what He is doing in showing mercy to some and justice to others, that He designs the gospel as a savor of life to some and of death to others. If a gardener in watering his garden where there are many weeds says that he waters the whole garden so that the weeds and herbs may come up and after this that he may pull out the weeds and foster the herbs for special use, is not this very right and fair and reasonable, insomuch that none needs inquire why he waters the weeds. Even so, the church is God's garden with many reprobate weeds in it. The gospel waters a mixed multitude of elect and reprobate, God declaring that the gospel offer is to both, for the conversion of the elect and the bringing to light of the enmity of the reprobate. And this manner of proving men and showing them to be what they are, by a common offer of grace to all, and casting in the net of the gospel promise among them, is a part of the wonderful providence whereby Christ makes all those that are outwardly called to be without excuse and at the same time fishes out the elect. This is to be admired and

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1. Vol. I, pp. 150, 182.

2. Vol. I, p. 184.

3. Vol. II, p. 380; Vol. IV, p. 128.



praised rather than disputed against.<sup>1</sup>

God could make all His willing subjects, but He lets some take their will that He may show how obstinate their nature is. His purpose of grace in saving some does not say that He is willing to destroy any. It only says that as He is not willing that any should perish, so He is resolved that all shall not get leave to destroy themselves as all would do. His acts of justice towards some is not inconsistent with a will to show mercy to all.<sup>2</sup>

Each of us is responsible for determining whether or not we be elect. If we wilfully and finally reject Christ, there is no remedy, and this sin of unbelief is worse than murdering Christ, for this is wilful, and that was in ignorance.<sup>3</sup> The power to work faith is promised to those who want faith.<sup>4</sup> If a man wilfully refuse the word of life and obstinately neglect the means of grace, will not God judge him for a self-damner?<sup>5</sup> To slight the gospel brings the greatest damnation and the hottest hell. The immediate cause of damnation is not this or that sin but the refusing of Christ by unbelief.<sup>6</sup>

Are you afraid that you were never elected? Meddle not with that secret. If your heart goes into the offer, and you make Him your elect by choosing Him, then your election is sure.<sup>7</sup> But say you, all shall not be saved, and perhaps not I? We answer, some shall be saved, and why not you? Wherefore are not all saved that hear this gospel, but because they will not give employment

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1. Vol. IV, pp. 119-121; Vol. I, p. 183.

210-212.

3. Vol. III, p. 419; Vol. I, pp. 44, 116.

4. Vol. I, p. 194; Vol. IV, pp. 145, 276.

125, 126.

6. Vol. VII, pp. 51, 174.

2. Vol. III, pp.

44, 116.

5. Vol. IV, pp.

7. Vol. I, pp.

55, 157.

to Christ to save them? If you do not accept Christ, you shall be damned for your neglect of Him.<sup>1</sup> We cannot say, you are an elect man, you are an elect woman, therefore believe. We have no such commission. God says by this gospel, Whosoever will, let him take, and in taking he shall have proof of his being an elect vessel.<sup>2</sup> But say you, if I be not elected, I will not get grace to come. Indeed, if you have no will to come, you have no grace to come. And if you have no will to come, whom can you blame but yourself that will not come? Will you complain that you have not grace to come and yet reject the gospel of grace that can only make you willing? Non-election can be no hindrance to you, for it is a secret with which you are not concerned.<sup>3</sup>

This doctrine of election is not to be thought of as without practical value. For God's design of gathering the elect is mentioned in Scripture as an encouragement to believers that they may have comfort of their election from all eternity. It is an encouragement to ministers that they may know their labor shall not be without success. It is a check and a blow to those who are final rejecters of Christ and refuse to believe. But never is it brought in as a discouragement to any person in the world in the matter of believing.<sup>4</sup>

Thus God creates faith in the elect according to His eternal decree. But perhaps someone is asking, How can I know if I actually have saving faith? What assurance is there that I possess

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1. Vol. I, p. 99; Vol. II, p. 408.  
Vol. II, p. 41.

2. Vol. I, pp. 182, 183;  
3. Vol. III, pp. 312, 313; Vol. V, pp.  
224, 225.

4. Vol. III, p. 312.

true faith? There are many tests by which you may try your faith to see if it be true. For instance, you are endeavoring to walk as Christ walked.<sup>1</sup> Your heart will be rent for sin and from sin. You will see your own want of purity.<sup>2</sup> You will be longing for Christ's second coming.<sup>3</sup> You will be making diligent use of means.<sup>4</sup> You will be making advances in the Christian life.<sup>5</sup> You will never mock at ministers for preaching the doctrine of grace.<sup>6</sup> You will never delight in the company of open sinners.<sup>7</sup> You will be striving to bring others to Christ.<sup>8</sup> You will have God in all your thoughts.<sup>9</sup> You will find yourself resisting temptation.<sup>10</sup>

These are sample tests by which you may try your faith. Undoubtedly, one may have saving faith and yet want that assurance which we commonly call assurance. However, from God's word it is certain that doubting is no part of faith. A doubtful wavering faith is not the faith that receives Christ.<sup>11</sup> On this point there will perhaps be much confusion, and so it is necessary to draw a clear distinction between (1) fiducial and (2) evidential assurance.

The first of these is the assurance of faith; the second, of sense and the effect of faith. By the first we receive Christ as ours; by the second we know Him to be ours. The first, every true believer has when he acts faith; the second, many believers

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1. Vol. I, pp. 134-136.      2. Vol. I, pp. 104, 105, 337;  
Vol. II, p. 40.      3. Vol. I, p. 138.      4. Vol. I, p. 357.  
5. Vol. I, p. 356.      6. Vol. II, p. 45.      8. Vol. III,  
p. 445.      7. Vol. II, p. 46.      9. Vol. IX, p. 94.  
10. Vol. V, p. 219.      11. Vol. III, p. 26.

want, for though they know they are acting faith, yet they are not conscious if it be saving or not. The one is the cause, the other the effect. The one is like heat in the fire; the other is like fire in the room. The object of one is the promise of God and the righteousness of Christ; of the other, the work of God within, such as graces, attainments, and experiences. The effect of one is justification; of the other, consolation.<sup>1</sup> As there is a great difference between a man's being persuaded that he has a great sum of money because he has it on good security, and his being persuaded because he has it in his hand, so here, by the persuasion of faith, a man is persuaded of salvation through Christ because he has it upon bond, namely, God's promise sealed with Christ's blood; and, by the persuasion of sense, he has it in his hand and feels it to be his.<sup>2</sup> The assurance of faith says, I am sure because God says it; and the assurance of sense says, I am sure because I feel it.<sup>3</sup> Every believer must have the first.

Perhaps someone is also saying that his faith may be only temporary and will soon pass away. Ah! here is great comfort to all those who believe. For the blood of Christ has purchased freedom from total apostasy and recovery after falls.<sup>4</sup> Redemption is sure and permanent. It is impossible that the true believer can totally and finally fall away.<sup>5</sup> Christ and you stand on the same ground, and, being united to Him, consider how sure

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1. Vol. III, pp. 28, 29, 347, 348.

3. Vol. IV, p. 184.

4. Vol. I, p. 38.

5. Vol. I, p. 43; Vol. IV, p. 379.

2. Vol. III, p. 348.

that ground is. If any assert that the believer may become liable to condemnation, consider how dishonoring this is to the Son of God.<sup>1</sup> Thus do Arminians dishonor Christ by denying the perseverance of the saints, for the grace that is of man's free will cannot persevere.<sup>2</sup> Not that believers shall be infallible to commit a mistake, not that there shall not be fearful desertions, but there shall never be a final separation.<sup>3</sup> Let go of this doctrine of perseverance, and your peace will be like the morning dew that passes away. Retain this, and you may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.<sup>4</sup>

But perhaps someone is asking still another question, Is faith alone all that is necessary for our justification? The answer to such a question is, Though faith alone justifies, yet justifying faith is not alone.<sup>5</sup> True faith brings holiness, love, and obedience along with it as surely as the rising sun brings light.<sup>6</sup> Holiness is necessary to salvation as being the native, necessary, and inseparable fruit of justification. It is the justified man's way of living or walking to heaven.<sup>7</sup> The believer has two hands, the one a holding hand and the other a working hand, like a woman spinning at the wheel. The one hand holds the thread and draws it down, and the other hand goes round and sets about the wheel. So here, the one hand of the believer is the hand of faith, the other is the hand of obedience.<sup>8</sup>

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1. Vol. I, p. 391; Vol. IX, p. 461.

3. Vol. III, p. 241; Vol. II, p. 63.

5. Vol. IX, p. 209.

7. Vol. II, p. 318; Vol. III, p. 240.

2. Vol. VIII, p. 39.

4. Vol. IX, p. 241.

6. Vol. II, p. 36.

8. Vol. II, p. 425.

Christ in His obedience purchased for us the Holy Spirit to work in us not only faith but sanctification.<sup>1</sup> So the believer is like a ship. It is not enough that he has the sails of grace implanted, but he must also have the winds of the Spirit filling his sails. Otherwise he cannot make way towards the heavenly port.<sup>2</sup>

What is the nature of this sanctification, this holiness? It is imparted, since the Spirit works it<sup>3</sup> and since it is the result of the revelation of Christ.<sup>4</sup> It is a work of God's free grace and so an effect of His free love.<sup>5</sup> In reality it is receiving Christ not only as a Savior to save from hell, but as a Lord to deliver from sin. It is carrying our faith beyond the cross even into heaven itself.<sup>6</sup> In fact, none can truly take Christ as a Savior unless they also truly take Him as a Lord for sanctification.<sup>7</sup>

Holiness is a full renovation of our natures into the image of God through Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit.<sup>8</sup> The believer is free from the power and dominion of sin.<sup>9</sup> A new heart brings the believer to a new walk and conversation.<sup>10</sup> Sanctification makes the will flexible and bends and inclines it to obedience to God's will.<sup>11</sup> It turns what were formerly moral virtues into graces, and they are performed from renewed principles.<sup>12</sup>

The believer has one exercise of faith, how to be quit of

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1. Vol. I, pp. 150, 151.      2. Vol. III, p. 109.  
 3. Vol. I, p. 215.      4. Vol. II, p. 236.      5. Vol. II,  
 p. 11.      6. Vol. III, p. 15; Vol. I, p. 96.      7. Vol. III,  
 p. 38.      8. Vol. VI, p. 6; Vol. I, pp. 312, 318.  
 9. Vol. II, p. 269.      10. Vol. VI, p. 335.      11. Vol. I,  
 p. 361.      12. Vol. III, p. 267.

sin.<sup>1</sup> We are under a greater obligation to holiness than Pagans, Jews, or even Adam, for we are under the law of love.<sup>2</sup> So it is wrong for a man to desire grace only to be glorified in heaven and not to be fruitful in order that God may be glorified on earth.<sup>3</sup> Christ allows none to live in sin that come to Him. Rather He purges out sin.<sup>4</sup> The grace of God cannot lead to licentiousness, but teaches to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts.<sup>5</sup>

Sanctification is thus necessary in true faith, but one may ask, What place do works and the law now have? Works are certainly not a condition of faith nor a condition of life. But, if the gospel deal savingly with us, it will lead us to the law as a rule.<sup>6</sup> For though we are justified by faith without works, it is a mistake to think that the justified man need not conform to the law.<sup>7</sup> The believer is constrained to obey by the love of a God in Christ and in order to glorify Him and show his gratitude to Him.<sup>8</sup> The gospel way of thinking is, He saves us that we may serve Him.<sup>9</sup> Our obedience is the necessary evidence of our union to Christ. Though less obedience is accepted in these who have a perfect obedience in their Head, yet no less obedience is required than under the law of works, though not now in the old covenant form.<sup>10</sup>

Our sanctification, however, is not complete in this life.

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1. Vol. I, p. 68.

2. Vol. VI, p. 19.

3. Vol. III,

p. 88. 4. Vol. III, p. 236; Vol. I, p. 255.

5. Vol. VI, p. 19.

6. Vol. II, p. 269; Vol. I, p. 406.

7. Vol. III, p. 42.

8. Vol. I, p. 198; Vol. II, p. 309.

9. Vol. II, p. 306.

10. Vol. II, p. 308.

Sin and corruption, darkness and ignorance, enmity and unbelief are not completely removed. Sin is left in the heart, but it is neither loved nor liked.<sup>1</sup> Actual purity is a daily dying to sin and living to righteousness. It is not purity actually, but in God's sight it is so.<sup>2</sup> Since some believers are more pure in this life than others, they are not all equally sanctified, though all believers are equally justified.<sup>3</sup> The believer cannot cease repenting till he has ceased sinning, and consequently till he has ceased living. Thus perfect sanctification comes only at death.<sup>4</sup>

Since holiness is not perfect at conversion and since sanctification is a process, God has provided means for assisting believers in their Christian lives. Among these are the church, the sacraments, the Bible, and the ministry.

The church is a society of people that live and dwell together, united by a common interest.<sup>5</sup> It is believers in the collective capacity. It is the bride of Christ. It was instituted by Christ. To be a member of this household of God one has only to be a member of Christ.<sup>6</sup> But a distinction is to be drawn between the visible and the invisible church. The church invisible, catholic, or universal, is that society of believers who have been, are, and shall be.<sup>7</sup> To the visible church belong all those who have made a visible and credible profession.<sup>8</sup> Christ is the head of the church, and He has left officers under

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1. Vol. I, pp. 102, 105.

3. Vol. VIII, p. 37.

5. Vol. VII, p. 265.

7. Vol. IV, p. 269.

2. Vol. I, pp. 363, 364.

4. Vol. III, p. 389; Vol. I, p. 326.

6. Vol. I, p. 6; Vol. VI, p. 5.

8. Vol. VI, p. 5.



Him according to the laws of His kingdom and in a suitableness to the liberties of His people, pointed out in His word.<sup>1</sup> Papists have tried to degrade Him from His office by placing the Pope in His stead as His deputy in His presence. They give him power to rule the Catholic church, to pardon sins, and to make laws binding men's consciences, which things are proper to Christ alone. Thus they take the crown off Christ's head and set it on the Pope's. To claim regency in the presence of the lawful prince is to proclaim rebellion against the prince. Christ is always present with His church, and therefore the Pope, by his claim, must needs thrust Christ out of His offices.<sup>2</sup> What a blasphemous beast he is, the Roman Anti-Christ, who would thus assume the very name and office of being the head of the church.<sup>3</sup> Since it is Christ's church, it is impossible that it can be totally ruined.<sup>4</sup> It is not safe to be without the church, for God dwells in the church and is present in its ordinances.<sup>5</sup>

Baptism is the seal of the believer's incorporation into Christ and the sign of the cleansing power of the blood of Christ.<sup>6</sup> It seals to us and to all the visible church a common general right to God's covenant, so that we may warrantable plead the promises of God.<sup>7</sup> Baptism is not absolutely necessary to salvation--this we assert against the church of Rome--yet the contempt and neglect of it, when it can be obtained, is damnable because of God's authority interposed.<sup>8</sup>

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1. Vol. III, p. 37.      2. Vol. I, p. 232.      3. Vol. IV, p. 479.  
 4. Vol. IV, p. 379.      5. Vol. VI, p. 23.  
 6. Vol. IX, p. 59; Vol. VIII, p. 470.      7. Vol. IV, p. 446.  
 8. Vol. VIII, pp. 256, 257.

The Lord's Supper, Communion, the Eucharist, is a memorial of the passion of Christ. It is a feeding upon and viewing by faith the value and virtue of His sacrifice.<sup>1</sup> It is a seal of the covenant of grace.<sup>2</sup> In the sacrament we receive Christ under a pawn, a pledge, a seal, for Christ comes down in the likeness of bread and wine to accomodate Himself to our nature and necessities and that we might see and apprehend His invisible glory, love, grace, and mercy under these visible elements in which He is spiritually, yet sacramentally and visibly, present.<sup>3</sup> Here Romanists spoil Christ of His true manhood, holding that Christ's body is not only in heaven, but really and substantially in all places where the sacrifice of the mass is offered. Thus they make it omnipresent and take away the very nature of a body.<sup>4</sup>

To the church God has entrusted His word in order that through it Christ might be revealed and the gospel made known.<sup>5</sup> For in the Bible Christ is to be found throughout, in both Old and New Testaments, in all the types, prophecies, promises, and doctrines, as the antitype, substance, and truth.<sup>6</sup> Faith comes by hearing what God says in His word, in this Bible, which is a book so attested as never any other book was.<sup>7</sup>

This book is God's word and is to be believed because He inspired those who wrote it.<sup>8</sup> In at least parts of Scripture God's inspiration was in reality dictation.<sup>9</sup> The prophets of old had the Spirit in a limited manner, only with respect to

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1. Vol. I, pp. 1, 59.      2. Vol. IV, p. 99.      3. Vol. III, p. 102; Vol. IV, p. 329; Vol. VIII, p. 142.      4. Vol. I, p. 232.      5. Vol. II, p. 218; Vol. I, p. 170.      6. Vol. IV, p. 347; Vol. II, p. 239.      7. Vol. VI, pp. 198, 199.      8. Vol. I, p. 263; Vol. II, p. 258.      9. Vol. I, p. 306; Vol. V, p. 68.

some particular revelations. Sometimes they spoke of themselves.<sup>1</sup> God used instruments of all sorts in penning the Scriptures that all sorts might meet with style and phrase of speech suitable to them.<sup>2</sup>

The doctrine taught in Scripture is without error, for it is a principle that we maintain that the apostles never erred in their teaching or in the doctrine delivered to the church.<sup>3</sup> General assemblies, judicatories, and councils of the church may err, but not Scripture, and the acts of these are to be regarded only according to their agreeableness to Scripture.<sup>4</sup>

The Bible is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice since it is the word and will of God.<sup>5</sup> What though men should pretend to the greatest antiquity that it is possible for sinful and superstitious customs to pretend to, let us hold by Scripture.<sup>6</sup> This is the sin of the Papists that they reject the Bible as sufficient to uphold their religion. They speak against the perspicuity of Scripture and receive unwritten traditions with the same reverence and affection. They even make the Pope the infallible judge of all controversies.<sup>7</sup> We cannot judge a-right until we judge according to the word of God.<sup>8</sup>

If the word of God be our rule, we will regard everything that has His authority stamped upon it, however small it may appear.<sup>9</sup> The least truth of God is a beam from the infinite Truth,

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1. Vol. V, p. 416.      2. Vol. I, p. 266.      3. Vol. II, p. 256.  
 4. Vol. II, p. 213; Vol. VI, p. 15.  
 5. Vol. I, pp. 248, 312; Vol. II, p. 213; Vol. IV, p. 51.  
 6. Vol. I, pp. 321, 235.      7. Vol. II, p. 195; Vol. I, p. 235.  
 8. Vol. I, p. 381.      9. Vol. VIII, p. 256.

and the man who will not adhere to the least truth of Christ will adhere to no truth in the day of trial for truth.<sup>1</sup> Every truth of the gospel is like so many steps or rounds of a ladder, and every one should be maintained and contended for, since it is the authority of God, speaking in the Scripture, that is in question.<sup>2</sup> Every truth denied or error maintained is like a cutting out of a round of the ladder.<sup>3</sup> A doctrine that is not to be found in the Bible nor taught us formerly in the word is a false doctrine.<sup>4</sup> The proper order of the church is when all things in it are ordered according to the Bible with respect to doctrine, worship, government, and discipline.<sup>5</sup> Whatever is not of God's institution is to be rejected though it were enforced with the authority of all the popes and prelates on earth.<sup>6</sup> To defile the worship of God impeaches His wisdom, as if we should supply the defects of His word by our inventions.<sup>7</sup>

These are the means, then, which God has supplied for assisting believers in their Christian lives. There remains one final matter to consider, and that is the future state of believers and unbelievers.

The day of the Lord is coming, yea, the clock of time is almost run out, when Christ will appear in all His glory and grandeur.<sup>8</sup> The earth will melt with fire, the resurrection of the dead will take place, and He will gather His saints together. Though the believer's body be scattered to the corners of the

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1. Vol. VI, p. 135.

2. Vol. III, p. 396; Vol. VIII, p. 256.

3. Ibid. 4. Vol. VIII, p. 169.

5. Vol. III, p. 2.

6. Vol. V, p. 175.

7. Vol. I, p. 346.

8. Vol. I, p. 262.

earth and resolved to its original elements, God will gather it all together again. As God will gather the scattered bones and dust, so He will bring their glorified souls, and they shall meet one another, soul and body, and be reunited, and then they will meet the Lord in the air.<sup>1</sup> The great judgment will follow. It is a mad fancy of the church of Rome, and it was an ignorant fancy of some mistaken divines and Greek fathers, that there is a state of purgatory between this and heaven. But we see from the Bible that in a moment the soul, separated from the body, is made pure. The thief upon the cross was glorified the same day that he was converted.<sup>2</sup>

At the judgment all men shall be judged according to their works. The saints shall then enter into eternal happiness and the sinners into eternal damnation. The saints will joyfully adore the equity of the Judge and not so much as give a sigh or sob at the terror of the sentence pronounced against the wicked, but clap their hands and send them to hell with a shout.<sup>3</sup>

What is heaven? It is God's presence.<sup>4</sup> It may be considered either as the place of freedom from wrath or of perfect likeness to God.<sup>5</sup> There is full vision of Christ and of the Father in Him, and there is everlasting communion with Him.<sup>6</sup> It is a place of perfect health and happiness. There will be no more sin, corruption, sorrow, darkness, infirmities, mortality, incapacity, or time.<sup>7</sup> A pure sinless state, perfection of grace,

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1. Vol. I, p. 325; Vol. III, p. 369.      2. Vol. I, p. 326.  
 3. Vol. III, p. 403.      4. Vol. I, p. 100.      5. Vol. IV, p. 246; Vol. II, p. 42.      6. Vol. IV, p. 427.  
 7. Vol. IV, p. 436; Vol. I, p. 115.

and fulness of joy in the presence of God, this is the saint's heaven.<sup>1</sup> But heaven really begins on earth and is only completed after death. For the life of grace is the same as the life of glory, the difference being like that between a child in the womb and a full grown man.<sup>2</sup> Heaven is entered when the believer comes by faith to Jesus Christ. The vision of God, likeness to Him, perfection in love, complete satisfaction are all enjoyed in part by the saint on earth.<sup>3</sup>

What is hell? It is the fire of God's wrath. It is just God Himself as a consuming fire. It is being forever without God.<sup>4</sup> God will have unmasked His glory and excellency (for there are no atheists in hell), and sinners will have seen what excellencies they are deprived of. What inexpressible torment will it be to be under a necessity of desiring that happiness which can never be granted.<sup>5</sup> For hell is everlasting. Think not that God will deliver any from damnation who have gone to hell. They are lost forever who die out of Christ.<sup>6</sup> The punishment of hell is eternal because God's justice is eternal. The duration of wrath and the curse is eternal. God supports the poor damned creature forever under wrath because it cannot, being finite, satisfy infinite justice.<sup>7</sup> But there will be degrees of punishment in hell. It will be damnation proportioned to the means that have been enjoyed and the greatness of the salvation neglected.<sup>8</sup>

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1. Vol. III, p. 269.      2. Vol. VIII, p. 364.      3. Vol. I, p. 94; Vol. IV, pp. 434, 435.      4. Vol. II, p. 385; Vol. VII, p. 43.      5. Vol. VII, p. 44.      6. Vol. V, p. 319.  
 7. Vol. I, p. 23.      8. Vol. III, p. 172; Vol. I, p. 44; Vol. IX, p. 105.

This sketch has attempted to arrange somewhat systematically and proportionally the main features of Ralph Erskine's theology as they appear in sentences and paragraphs of his sermons. A few comments have been made in the course of the discussion, in the footnotes, but the following are some general observations.

First, regarding his use of theology. His sermons have a consistent theological tone, and he employs doctrine in a number of ways: to furnish motivation for Christian conduct; as a basis for comfort and assurance; as the antidote for heresy; as positive truth. Emphasis on different points varies from sermon to sermon. Particular doctrines are rather fully developed in certain places and only mentioned or suggested or omitted in others. Contradictions and variations occasionally seem to occur with regard to the same point of doctrine. Attempts at simplification often resulted in insufficient clarity and shallow support, raising at the same time objections or problems which the minister does not answer. Attempts at exact theological explanation frequently resulted in involved reasonings and dull preaching.

Secondly, the great emphasis of Ralph Erskine's preaching was the sovereignty of God as seen in the exercise of His free grace. This is the pivot around which his whole theology revolved. It was the theme that consistently recurred in his sermons.

Thirdly, Marrow doctrine is very much in evidence, especially in his earlier sermons. Assurance of salvation is essential

to faith, but careful explanation is usually made of what is meant. The universal offer of salvation is to be made, since the atonement is valid for all those that believe. Holiness is not necessary to salvation as a condition, nor is any other thing like repentance, faith, good works, a condition that must be met before we are justified. While not conditions, these are evidences. The believer is not obligated to the law as a rule in order to life, though the law will be the rule of his life. Love, not fear of punishment or hope of reward, is the motive of Christian obedience.

Fourthly, the five disputed points of Calvinism are propounded and defended. Total depravity and unconditional election are major themes. Irresistible grace and perseverance of the saints are less emphasized. The atonement is preached in such a way that it is actually limited, but possibly universal.

Fifthly, covenant theology has a major place in his theology.

Sixthly, the presence of Arminianism, Arianism, Socinianism, and Roman Catholicism in his day was the occasion for the emphasis that he gives to the absolute sovereignty of God, the Trinity, the deity of Christ, and the final authority of the Bible.

#### JOHN ERSKINE

In no sermon does John Erskine present a formal statement of what he considers to be fundamental doctrines. In one place,



however, he lists those doctrines that a minister should well understand before he begins to preach.<sup>1</sup> A minister should understand well

the doctrine of man's primitive apostasy from God, with its unhappy effects on the whole human race; the method of recovery through Christ; the work of the Spirit in applying a purchased redemption; the full and free offers of Christ, and of salvation through him, made, in the gospel, to the very chief of sinners; the nature of that faith which unites to Christ, of that holiness which makes men meet for the inheritance of saints in light, and which is indeed heaven begun in the soul; and of those various good works of piety, or of charity, by which we are bound to glorify God, to serve him in our generation, and to prove, to ourselves and others, the truth and energy of our faith.

These are the central themes on which he preaches. In general, his theology will be presented in the same manner as that of Ralph Erskine.

He states that the existence of God can be demonstrated:

If something now is, something must have always been. If there was a time, when nothing existed, nothing could ever have been: for, to suppose nothing to give existence to any thing, is to suppose activity before an agent or a source of activity existed, which is a contradiction. There must be some original being, who never began to be, and consequently, who exists necessarily, and of himself. --There are in the world, wisdom, and power, and justice, and goodness. These are not nothing. They could not come out of nothing. They must therefore belong to the original being, whom we denominate God.--The creatures we love may cease to exist, or may cease to be lovely. But God exists necessarily, possessed of every perfection, without any possible variableness or shadow of turning.<sup>2</sup>

What is the nature of God? He is perfect, eternal, and unchangeable. His being has no beginning and His perfections

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1. Vol. I, pp. 25, 26.

2. Vol. II, p. 174.

cannot change.<sup>1</sup> He is infinitely wise and just and good.<sup>2</sup> He is all-powerful, but His power is not unlimited. It is limited in its exercise by His wisdom and equity, and power without such limits is weakness and not perfection.<sup>3</sup> God is a Trinity. For Jesus Christ is God in the true and proper sense of the word. He is equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup> The divine nature is the same in all three persons of the Trinity, but only the Son was made flesh.<sup>5</sup>

With a word God created the world, communicating life to a great variety of creatures.<sup>6</sup> He made all things beautiful and glorious, well-adapted to answer the end of their creation.<sup>7</sup> He sustains the world now with His providence,<sup>8</sup> and if God withdrew His sustaining power and influence, His creatures would all return back to their primitive nothingness.<sup>9</sup> All men and events are included in His providential government. Even the tempers and inclinations, the schemes and enterprises, the conduct and behavior of men, however contingent they appear to us, are under the direction and government of God.<sup>10</sup> The days of man are with God. His months are determined by divine decree. Bounds are fixed to his natural life which it cannot pass.<sup>11</sup> Providence particularly works for the good of the elect. It governs all they do and all that others connected with them do.<sup>12</sup>

All God's works were known to Him and decreed by Him before

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1. Vol. II, p. 174; Vol. I, p. 448.      2. Vol. II, p. 328.  
 3. Vol. II, p. 328. Ralph never speaks of limiting God's power even in this way.      4. Vol. I, pp. 225, 330. This doctrine is given little emphasis compared with Ralph.      5. Vol. I, p. 351.  
 6. Vol. I, p. 332.      7. Vol. II, p. 289.      8. Vol. II, p. 197.  
 9. Vol. II, p. 198.      10. Vol. I, pp. 468, 469.  
 11. Vol. I, p. 464.      12. Vol. I, p. 484.

the foundation of the world. None will pretend that God foresaw what He would do, what He had not determined to do.<sup>1</sup> The perceptions of God's understanding and the determinations of His will had no beginning and are capable of no change.<sup>2</sup>

What is the end, the purpose, of God's creation and providential government of the world? It is even His own glory and the holiness and happiness of mankind.<sup>3</sup> All creatures contribute willingly or unwillingly to promote His glory, the great end for which He gave them existence.<sup>4</sup> Especially in the incarnation and death of Christ are the perfections of God manifested. The death of Christ also witnesses to the ends for which Providence may be supposed to have permitted the introduction of moral evil. For sin is the occasion for displaying the glory of the divine perfections.<sup>5</sup>

God created man in His own image in a state of happiness, innocence, and integrity.<sup>6</sup> With man He was graciously pleased to make a covenant of works that upon the condition of perfect obedience, he should have his reward. Had our first parents perfectly and perpetually obeyed God, without question their happiness, and that of all their descendants, would have been secured; not indeed that they, in a proper sense, could have merited anything at God's hands.<sup>7</sup> But our first parents did not obey, and, as a result, they fell from the estate wherein they were

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1. Vol. I, p. 448.      2. Ibid.      3. Vol. I, p. 20. Ralph says little or nothing about God's purpose involving also the happiness of man.      4. Vol. II, p. 197.      5. Vol. II, p. 290; Vol. I, pp. 330, 331. In this Ralph agreed.  
6. Vol. II, pp. 175, 358; Vol. I, p. 298.      7. Vol. I, p. 281.

created.<sup>1</sup> This sin had its effect on them, on all their posterity, and on the rest of creation. Man cast off the attire of innocence and integrity and exchanged the image of God for that of the devil and became regardless of his truest interests. By this apostasy the human body lost much of that beauty and glory with which it was originally adorned. This first sin of Adam and Eve had its effect on creation, for it defaced the beauty and disturbed the harmony of the lower world. Briars and thorns were brought forth as part of the curse for this sin.<sup>2</sup>

A depraved and polluted nature our first parents communicated to all their posterity, and in such wretched circumstances do they lie until effectual grace brings them out of it.<sup>3</sup> Natural man, who has in him nothing but mere unrenewed nature, can neither know nor discern the things of God.<sup>4</sup> So diseased and disordered is his soul that because God is beyond the reach of his sight, He discerns not His excellency from His works or His word and is alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him. No capacity or inclination remains for loving and enjoying the Fountain of blessedness. This natural temper is universal in the human race.<sup>5</sup> Towards God man has lost all propensity, bent, or bias of mind.<sup>6</sup>

Yet the law, requiring perfect obedience, is not abrogated or dispensed with, nor has the obligation of one of its precepts ceased or in any measure been relaxed. A righteousness answering

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1. Vol. II, p. 175.

289.

3. Vol. I, p. 289.

5. Vol. II, p. 171.

2. Vol. I, p. 489; Vol. II, pp. 284,

4. Vol. I, p. 13.

6. Ibid.

the purity and perfection of that law is still required.<sup>1</sup> But we cannot find in ourselves actions or dispositions worthy to procure for us a title to pardon of sin and acceptance with God. For in many things we offend all. There is not a just man upon earth who does good and sins not. Our hearts are depraved and corrupted, and our best obedience can never rise higher than the corrupt spring from which it flows.<sup>2</sup> Even one transgression renders the sinner infinitely guilty in God's sight, infinitely hateful to Him, and infinitely the object of His displeasure and wrath,<sup>3</sup> because an infinite object has been sinned against.<sup>4</sup> Our obedience at best has but a finite value and can never atone for an infinite guilt.<sup>5</sup> No one since that fatal apostasy has been uniformly faithful in goodness, excepting One, who was more than man.<sup>6</sup> Reason and conscience tell a man that he ought to be good, and some broken and scattered fragments of nature's original laws still remain impressed upon their spirits.<sup>7</sup> But this is of little value in helping a man to be good.

However, God determined not to leave all of mankind in its fallen state, and so Jesus Christ was sent as a Redeemer in order that the breach made by sin might be healed, which thing man himself could not do. By His coming God is glorified as in no other way, for could He, as with a word He made a world, so with a word redeem it, His love would never have appeared so illustrious.

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1. Vol. I, p. 284.      2. Vol. I, p. 285. John Erskine does not go as far as Ralph in condemning as sins our ordinary actions and use of means.      3. Ibid.      4. Vol. I, p. 282.  
 5. Vol. I, p. 289.      6. Vol. II, p. 145.  
 7. Vol. II, pp. 145, 172.

In order to be the Redeemer of mankind Jesus must needs be both God and man. For only by His incarnation would He be able to mediate peace between the parties at variance. He became man that the right of redemption might belong to Him, for without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. As by man came death, so by man must also come the resurrection of the dead. He became man, too, that by His example, as well as by His doctrine, He might promote heavenly-mindedness, a contempt for sublunary enjoyments, humility, meekness, and forgiveness.<sup>1</sup> He had to be God in order to negotiate our cause with our injured Sovereign. His divine nature also enabled Him to endure God's wrath without sinking, and the suffering which He endured in that nature became of infinite value. It secured Him as well in perfect holiness.<sup>2</sup> The doctrine of the incarnation is necessary to support the whole doctrine of redemption.<sup>3</sup>

This union of God and man is a mystery. God and man in one person. Notwithstanding His two natures He is one Mediator, one Person only, for His human nature had no separate subsistence of its own, but from the first moment of its existence it was the human nature of the Son of God.<sup>4</sup> His glory as God could not be diminished or increased.<sup>5</sup> He had no struggle with corrupt appetites and passions like ours. He was never sick.<sup>6</sup> He knew from the beginning what was to befall Him.<sup>7</sup> He was truly human, for He took not our nature when it was in its primitive glory but when

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1. Vol. I, pp. 333, 334; Vol. II, pp. 24, 25.

2. Ibid.

3. Vol. I, p. 360.

4. Vol. I, p. 332.

5. Vol. I,

p. 429.

6. Vol. II, p. 27; Vol. I, p. 334.

7. Vol. II, p. 27.

reduced to circumstances mean and wretched. He assumed a true body and a reasonable soul. A body subject to hunger, thirst, weariness, and other common sinless infirmities. A soul susceptible of fear, anger, sorrow, compassion, and every other innocent affliction and passion of humanity.<sup>1</sup>

What purposes were accomplished by the life and death of Jesus? The chief end was that through His blood and merits sinners might be pardoned and accepted with God.<sup>2</sup> Our guilt was expiated, sin was destroyed, man was restored to the lost favor and image of God, holiness and righteousness were re-established, and man was blessed by being turned away from iniquity.<sup>3</sup> Is not the sentiment of Socinians justly deemed a dangerous error, that Jesus suffered only to set before us a pattern of obedience and submission and to seal the truth of His doctrine? Undoubtedly it is. For it places Him on the level of the prophets and apostles and thousands of others who died rather than surrender the faith.<sup>4</sup>

Thus it is that Christ has become our righteousness and graciously supplied what nowhere else could have been found. In our room and stead He fulfilled all righteousness, for His righteousness which was perfect and complete and fully answering the utmost demands of law and justice was a righteousness of infinite value, being wrought out by One of infinite dignity. It was a righteousness in consequence of which the sinner is absolved from

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1. Vol. I, p. 333.

2. Vol. I, p. 381.

3. Vol. I, pp. 335, 336, 340; Vol. II, pp. 25, 29, 34.

4. Vol. II, p. 293.

guilt and freed from condemnation, accepted as blessed in God's sight, and entitled to all the blessings of the well-ordered covenant.<sup>1</sup> However, God does not judge the righteousness of Christ to be a righteousness wrought out by us in our own person, nor does He take it from Christ and transfer it to us. Rather God places it to our account, deals well with us for the sake of it, and graciously accepts it for our pardon and justification.<sup>2</sup>

But how are the benefits of Christ's death actually applied to an individual? By means of faith. Certainly not by works of the law.<sup>3</sup> Not by hearing that salvation can be merited by repentance and amendment of life.<sup>4</sup> It is faith only. Faith signifies a strong and lively trust in the declarations and promises of God.<sup>5</sup> It is the persuasion that Jesus is the anointed Savior of the world. And this persuasion supposes conviction of our natural guilt, wretchedness, and inability to help ourselves. It is not, however, a persuasion of Christian doctrines derived from the prejudices of education or barely founded on external evidence, which is saving faith. His faith only is saving whose persuasion of these flows from spiritual discoveries of their importance, beauty, and glory, and whose soul in consequence of it betakes itself to Christ and rests and relies upon Him alone for salvation. The light in the understanding powerfully attracts to Christ and captivates the heart so that it can no longer slight or reject Christ.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Vol. I, pp. 289, 290.      2. Vol. I, p. 291. This statement is somewhat different from the doctrine of imputation as given by Ralph Erskine.      3. Vol. I, p. 227.      4. Vol. I, pp. 101, 102.      5. Vol. I, p. 227.      6. Vol. I, pp. 419, 420.



In what sense are we justified by faith? In one sense, the sufferings of Christ are the only condition of justification, these alone founding our claim to pardon and acceptance. In another sense, love, meekness, and other graces of the Spirit, as well as faith, may be termed conditions, seeing that these graces and justification are always connected.<sup>1</sup> But in another sense, we are justified by faith only, even as faith unites to the Mediator in and by whom we are justified. By believing, the Christian becomes one with Jesus, and His merits then are imputed to him.<sup>2</sup>

The gospel is properly the glad tidings that Jesus is willing and able to save, and that even the chief of sinners is warranted to come to Him for salvation.<sup>3</sup> This salvation and faith are freely offered to all men, for God would have all men to be saved.<sup>4</sup> Every sinner to whom the gospel is preached has a right to look to Christ for spiritual health.<sup>5</sup> But God does not leave the choice of this gospel to the uncertainty of man's free will. Rather from all eternity it was provided in the covenant of redemption that certain ones of Adam's posterity should be given to Christ as His seed.<sup>6</sup> These elect were given, not that He might barely purchase salvation for them, but that their salvation might be rendered infallibly certain.<sup>7</sup> These persons so given to Christ were a select determinate number and

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1. Ralph Erskine was much opposed to even the suggestion of this sense. 2. Vol. I, p. 292. 3. Vol. I, p. 407.  
 4. Vol. II, p. 358. 5. Vol. I, p. 409. 6. Vol. I, pp. 445, 447. 7. Vol. I, p. 449.

not the whole of mankind.<sup>1</sup> When it was determined that Christ should die for sinners, it was determined what benefits this or the other individual should derive from His death.<sup>2</sup> This was not just a decree to save such as should happen to believe, but certain persons were singled out and absolutely ordained to eternal life.<sup>3</sup> That God equally designed the happiness of all mankind on the uncertain conditions of faith, repentance, and perseverance, supposes that God's designs are either accomplished or baffled as the sovereign choice of man decides, so that God can extend His love and mercy no farther than man thinks fit to allow. How different from this is the Scripture doctrine that God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and that the purpose of God, according to election, must stand!<sup>4</sup>

Salvation was obtained for a chosen number, not as some say, conditionally for all, certainly for none. A matter wherein the glory of God and the happiness of mankind were so deeply concerned was of too great consequence to be left to the determination of man's free will. God tried free will in a state of innocence, and it failed in the trial. So God will certainly not commit the success of His important schemes to the casual choice of free will in Adam's depraved offspring.<sup>5</sup> Nothing save the exceeding greatness of divine power can convince sinners that there is no help for them but in Christ.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Vol. I, p. 450.

2. Vol. I, p. 451.

3. Ibid.

4. Vol. I, p. 452.

5. Vol. II, p. 499.

6. Vol. I, pp. 303, 422.

Why does God elect some and reject others? It is only in His sovereignty that an answer can be found: He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. But by this is not meant that God determines without a wise reason.<sup>1</sup> Is not God unjust? No. God does not cease to be good because all do not equally partake. Justice does not require that the highest manifestations of God's goodness be granted to every transgressor.<sup>2</sup> When an earthly sovereign has crushed a rebellion, his granting an indemnity to some of the guilty does not render his punishing others unjust. The elect were as unworthy of eternal life, yea, as worthy of damnation as well as others, and therefore they were not chosen on account of their own merit and excellency.<sup>3</sup> Thus that God saves any is only because of His free grace, His free unmerited love.<sup>4</sup> God suffers the wicked to abuse their wisdom without restraint and brings them to circumstances which through their own fault increase their blindness and unbelief. But He is not obliged to reclaim such and is not unrighteous in <sup>not</sup> doing so.<sup>5</sup> He does not doom to misery where there is no guilt.<sup>6</sup>

Can we know who are elected? Certainly. All who die in a state of faith and holiness were elected.<sup>7</sup> If we love God, God first loved us. If we believe, we were doubtless elected. We cannot know that we are not elected. The least degree of grace proves our election while the excess of wickedness does not prove

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1. Vol. I, p. 456; Vol. II, p. 291.

3. Vol. I, p. 452.

p. 252.

6. Vol. II, p. 291.

2. Vol. I, p. 454.

4. Vol. II, p. 247.

5. Vol. I,

7. Vol. I, p. 448.

we are reprobates.<sup>1</sup> Faith unfeigned is as sure a sign of election as the rising sun is of approaching day.<sup>2</sup>

Some believe it best never to introduce this doctrine of election into the pulpit, but all Scripture is profitable for doctrine, and a minister cannot avoid it and be pure from the blood of all men. This doctrine has been and may be abused. But if this doctrine is banished, so also should the doctrine of the justice of God and His free mercy.<sup>3</sup>

The coming of Christ was intended not only to restore to man the favor of God, but also to restore his conformity to the image and will of God.<sup>4</sup> Through faith in Jesus Christ we are sanctified as well as justified and receive an inherent righteousness.<sup>5</sup> But this does not in the least dissolve the believer's obligations to the strictest obedience.<sup>6</sup> However, though no man can obey without vital union to Christ, where such a union is, obedience will flow from it.<sup>7</sup>

Virtuous actions cannot be said to be necessary to salvation in the same sense as inherent holiness, for a person may die before this can be expressed in outward behavior. So with elect infants.<sup>8</sup> But while virtuous actions do not constitute a person inherently righteous, they declare him to be so.<sup>9</sup> Good works are absolutely necessary to justify a profession of piety to God.<sup>10</sup> And while Jesus has purchased for believers the bless-

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1. Vol. I, pp. 458, 465.      2. Vol. II, p. 499.      3. Vol. I, p. 446.  
 4. Vol. I, p. 355.      5. Vol. II, p. 365;  
 Vol. I, pp. 295-309.      6. Vol. I, p. 313.      7. Vol. I, p. 316.  
 8. Vol. I, p. 309.      9. Ibid.      10. Vol. II, p. 363.

ings of this life as well as of eternity, this does not say that this purchase 'supersedes the necessity of proper means for obtaining them. Who will say that because of the long-suffering of God in preserving our natural life, therefore we should not eat or drink or sleep for life? Equally absurd are the reasonings by which some would conclude that in no sense whatsoever are we to work for eternal life or by patient continuance in well-doing to seek for glory, honor, and immortality.<sup>1</sup>

Motives in good works are all-important. However blameless men's outward conduct appears, yet if they act barely from self-interested principles and have not charity and love to God, to Christ, and to their fellow-man, they are nothing and have not the Spirit of Christ in them.<sup>2</sup> If we attempt to build our goodness upon any other foundation than the right conception of Christ's atonement and a just and faithful reliance on it, it will fail. It is simply not enough to believe that Jesus gave us an example and loved us as a friend, teacher, and reformer of mankind.<sup>3</sup> And though we may not be able to comprehend the doctrine of the Trinity or the Divinity and Sonship of Christ, we may understand enough of the love of the Father to influence our temper and conduct.<sup>4</sup> Take away the mystery of the incarnation, and you have removed the doctrine that above all others draws out a response in duty.<sup>5</sup>

God's election renders salvation infallibly certain, for

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1. Vol. I, p. 314. Ralph Erskine would have frowned upon the idea and implications of working for eternal life. 2. Vol. I, p. 55. 3. Vol. II, p. 147. 4. Vol. I, p. 355. 5. Vol. I, p. 357.

none given to Christ shall finally perish.<sup>1</sup> He who is once interested in the favor and friendship of God can never fall from it, neither can such a person ever apostatize from God's ways.<sup>2</sup>

In assisting the Christian to progress in sanctification, God has provided His word. The Bible is the only complete and infallible directory of our faith and practice.<sup>3</sup> It is to be appealed to as the final authority in all controversy.<sup>4</sup> In recommending the belief of truth and the practice of duty, we are to go as far and no farther than the Bible goes.<sup>5</sup> The doctrines revealed in Scripture are not doubtful speculations or light and trivial matters, but truths of infallible certainty of the most sublime and excellent nature.<sup>6</sup>

The Bible is the infallible word of God because His Spirit inspired those who wrote it, and can we charge error against those who wrote "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost?"<sup>7</sup> Any other guide will in some instances mislead or at least prove defective in its instructions.<sup>8</sup> What the Spirit judged proper to reveal has been revealed and every doctrine and precept is wisely suited to promote God's glory and man's salvation and was revealed for that purpose.<sup>9</sup> Though secured from error by inspiration, yet as to style and method the penmen of the Scriptures seem to have been usually left to their own genius.<sup>10</sup> For wise reasons the Bible was not written in a systematic form.<sup>11</sup>

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1. Vol. I, p. 451; Vol. II, pp. 250, 251.      2. Vol. I, p. 314.  
 3. Vol. I, p. 180.      4. Vol. I, pp. 167, 180, 366.  
 5. Vol. I, p. 102.      6. Vol. I, pp. 144, 209.      7. Vol. I, pp. 7, 14, 226; Vol. II, pp. 67, 412.  
 8. Vol. I, p. 27.  
 9. Vol. I, p. 51.      10. Vol. I, p. 151.      11. Vol. I, p. 146.

There remain to be mentioned the final states of believers and unbelievers. What is heaven? It is to be with Jesus where He is and to behold His glory.<sup>1</sup> It is eternal life, freedom from everything evil in temporal life, full growth, and the consummation and perfection of the spiritual life imparted by regeneration.<sup>2</sup> There will be degrees in heaven, for the reward of the saints hereafter shall bear some proportion to their progress in holiness here below.<sup>3</sup> In the spiritual life on earth we begin to know, to serve, to enjoy God, to resemble Christ, and so it is really heaven begun.<sup>4</sup> And there is a difference only of degrees between heaven begun and heaven perfected. What is hell? It is separation from God, pains insupportable, eternal anguish, and departure from all joy, comfort, and hope.<sup>5</sup> Had there not been a heaven and a hell, Jesus would not have died.<sup>6</sup>

In conclusion, the following are some observations and comparisons.

First, regarding his use of theology. John Erskine's sermons are primarily practical and moral, and it is perhaps due to this fact that there is not the same consistent doctrinal tone and emphasis in his sermons, taken as a whole, as in Ralph Erskine's. John Erskine's doctrinal sermons naturally contain the major proportion of his theology, and outside of these, theology plays its part mainly in the background, being mentioned

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1. Vol. II, p. 234.

p. 316.  
p. 473.

2. Vol. I, pp. 472, 475.

4. Vol. I, p. 475; Vol. II, p. 358.

6. Vol. II, p. 291.

3. Vol. I,

5. Vol. I,

or suggested but treated at no great length. He used theology to give motivation to Christian conduct, to furnish comfort and assurance, enlightenment and guidance, and to present positive truth in opposition to error. Only occasionally are there rather involved discussions on points of doctrine, and there are fewer contradiction and variations in his teaching than in the case of Ralph Erskine.

Secondly, like Ralph, his great emphasis is on the free grace of God as seen particularly in the work of redemption. Total depravity and unconditional election are strongly emphasized.

Thirdly, there is little trace of Marrow doctrine. For instance, there is no emphasis on assurance, either of faith or of sense. Holiness and faith might even be termed conditions of salvation. Justification does not relieve one of the necessity of working for eternal life. These last two statements would have been very much opposed by Ralph Erskine, for their implications. Love should be the primary motive for obedience, though others are not excluded. The atonement is valid for all who believe.

Fourthly, his Calvinism is evangelical like that of Ralph Erskine. The universal offer of salvation is to be made to all men, in order that the elect may be gathered and the reprobate left inexcusable.



Fifthly, there is less emphasis on covenant theology. The covenant of works is mentioned, but neither the covenant of redemption nor that of grace are treated to any great extent.

Sixthly, he does not stress the doctrine of the Trinity as much as Ralph, and his doctrines are generally from a more rational point of view.

### HUGH BLAIR

Nowhere does Hugh Blair present a complete statement of his theological position in a sermon. Nor does he ever give what he considers to be its fundamental points. However, in one place he suggests what these latter, in general, might be:

The doctrines of the Christian religion are rational and pure. All that it has revealed concerning the perfections of God, his moral government and laws, the destination of man, and the rewards and punishments of a future state, is perfectly consonant to the most enlightened reason. In some articles which transcend the limits of our present faculties, as in what relates to the essence of the God-head, the fallen state of mankind, and their redemption by Jesus Christ, its doctrines may appear mysterious and dark.<sup>1</sup>

These are points that <sup>he</sup> considers in his preaching.

There is an eternal Mind who puts all things in motion, Himself remaining at rest.<sup>2</sup> His existence is derived from no prior cause nor is dependent on any thing without Himself. His nature can be influenced by no power, affected by no accident, impaired by no time.<sup>3</sup> It is this attribute of immutability that

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1. Vol. III, pp. 345, 346.

2. Vol. II, p. 392.

3. Vol. II, pp. 81, 82.

more than any other distinguishes the divine from the human.<sup>1</sup>  
 Ascribing to God the mutability of human passions continues to  
 be the description of all superstitious and enthusiastic sects  
 which, since the days of David, have sprung up in the world.<sup>2</sup>  
 God's power is almighty, His wisdom infinite, and His goodness  
 supreme.<sup>3</sup>

There is nothing which all nature more loudly proclaims than  
 that some Supreme Being has framed and rules the universe.<sup>4</sup> The  
 study of nature is no other than the study of divine wisdom dis-  
 played in creation.<sup>5</sup> Nothing except goodness could originally  
 have prompted creation, for the Supreme Being is self-existent  
 and all-sufficient and has no wants which He could seek to sup-  
 ply.<sup>6</sup> He created the world out of nothing.<sup>7</sup> However, there is  
 no reason to think that God was without employment before the  
 creation of the world. Other globes and worlds and numberless  
 orders of beings to us unknown may have afforded an endless va-  
 riety of objects to the ruling care of the great Father of all.<sup>8</sup>

But can one believe that the Divine Artist after He had  
 finished the earth with such admirable wisdom would then throw  
 it out of His hands as a neglected work and would suffer the af-  
 fairs of its inhabitants to proceed by chance and would behold  
 them without concern run into misrule and disorder?<sup>9</sup> No. For  
 if He exists, He must undoubtedly pervade and inspect and govern

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1. Vol. II, p. 80.      2. Vol. II, p. 95.      3. Vol. II, pp.  
 48, 79, 80.      4. Vol. V, p. 24.      5. Vol. III, p. 371.  
 6. Vol. III, p. 378.      7. Vol. III, p. 364.      8. Vol. III,  
 p. 365.      9. Vol. III, p. 374.

the world. He must know what is going on throughout His universe. To be everywhere present is the attribute of His nature which of all others is most necessary to His administration of the universe.<sup>1</sup>

God governs His universe by His decrees. Foreseen by Him was every revolution which the course of the ages was to produce. Whatever counsels of men effect was comprehended in His decrees.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, we cannot conceive of God acting as the governor of the world unless His government were to extend to all events that happen. It is certain that in God's universe nothing comes to pass causelessly or in vain.<sup>3</sup> All events are at every moment in His hand. Nothing can make any resistance to His purpose, or fall out in any way besides or beyond His plan.<sup>4</sup> All that happens to man in life has been foreknown and arranged by God.<sup>5</sup> The number of our days is determined by Him.<sup>6</sup> Both the evils and goods which compose this mixed state come from the hand of God, for a little reflection will convince us that in God's world neither good nor evil can happen by chance.<sup>7</sup> Man has by no means the disposal of events which happen.<sup>8</sup> Since God made us, He has the absolute right to regulate our conduct.<sup>9</sup>

God is the First Cause, the Supreme Lord, who from the beginning has arranged and prepared the whole series of causes and effects, of whose destination and agency men are no more than

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1. Vol. III, pp. 202, 203.      2. Vol. II, p. 84. In the doctrine of providence all three agreed.      3. Vol. V, pp. 382, 385.      4. Vol. V, p. 100.      5. Vol. IV, pp. 44, 45.      6. Vol. III, p. 286.      7. Vol. IV, p. 311.      8. Vol. IV, p. 269.      9. Vol. III, p. 368, 369.

secondary instruments.<sup>1</sup> Yet the ordinary course of God's providence is carried on by human means. He has settled a train of events which proceed in a regular succession of causes and effects without His appearing to interpose or to act.<sup>2</sup> But because providence is superior to us, it does not follow that therefore man has no part to act.<sup>3</sup>

All the operations of the government of God may ultimately be resolved into goodness.<sup>4</sup> He is good to all in His government, but especially to the righteous.<sup>5</sup> The life of every person who loves God forms a system complete within itself, where nothing befalls them fortuitously, nothing happens in vain or without a meaning, but every event possesses its proper and destined place and forms a link in that great chain of causes which was appointed from the beginning to carry on their improvement and felicity.<sup>6</sup> However, things work together for good, not indiscriminately to all, but limited to those chosen by God to eternal life.<sup>7</sup>

We are at present permitted to act our part freely and without constraint. No violence is done to our inclination or choice.<sup>8</sup> While everything good comes from above, of evil and misery man himself is the author.<sup>9</sup> Men are allowed to act their parts freely that their characters may be formed and ascertained.<sup>10</sup> Though the mode of divine operation remains unknown, the fact of an overruling influence is equally certain in the moral as it is in the

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1. Vol. V, pp. 36, 37.      2. Vol. I, p. 367.      3. Vol. V, p. 386.  
 4. Vol. II, p. 381.      5. Vol. V, p. 99.  
 6. Vol. V, p. 93; Vol. IV, p. 96.      7. Vol. V, p. 89.  
 8. Vol. IV, p. 46.      9. Vol. IV, p. 274. The sovereignty of God vs. the free will of man is an unresolved problem for all three men. Ralph consistently minimized the latter.  
 10. Vol. I, p. 419.

natural world.<sup>1</sup> These are fundamental truths: that in all His dispensations God is just and good; the cause of all our troubles is in ourselves, not in Him; virtue is the surest guide to a happy life; he who forsakes it enters upon the path of death.<sup>2</sup>

What is the purpose of God in creation and providence? It is the display of the divine perfections. Yet we are not hereby to conceive the Supreme Being as seeking praise to Himself from a principle of ostentation or vain-glory. His praise consists in the general order and welfare of His creation. This end cannot be attained unless mankind be made to feel the subjection under which it is placed.<sup>3</sup> A second purpose that God has is the happiness of mankind.<sup>4</sup>

The present condition of man was not his original or primitive state, for we are informed by divine revelation that it is the consequence of his voluntary apostasy from God and a state of innocence.<sup>5</sup> In the moral as well as in the natural world we may plainly discern the signs of some violent convulsion which has shattered the original workmanship of the Almighty. A tradition seems to have pervaded almost every nation that the human race had either through some offense forfeited or through some misfortune lost that station of honor which it once possessed.<sup>6</sup> Man was created after the image of God, but

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1. Vol. V, p. 381.      2. Vol. IV, pp. 285, 286.      3. Vol. II, p. 372. Blair here tries to rid the Calvinistic idea of the purpose of God, as expressed by some (for instance, Ralph Erskine), of its seeming harshness.      4. Vol. I, p. 57; Vol. IV, p. 25.      5. Vol. II, p. 176.      6. Vol. I, pp. 180, 181.

that image was defaced by our sin and apostasy.<sup>1</sup> Yet, darkened as the divine image now is among mankind, it is not wholly effaced.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of the fall, death came, and human nature fell so low that it became incapable of retrieving itself.<sup>3</sup> The influence of reason was weakened and that of passion strengthened within the heart, so that mankind is consistent neither in good nor in evil.<sup>4</sup> The heart's bias, however, of innate corruption gives it a perpetual tendency downwards into vice and disorder.<sup>5</sup>

Amidst this wreck of human nature traces still remain which indicate its Author.<sup>6</sup> For in the present state of human frailty there belongs to human nature a sense of moral good and evil in action and conduct. But it is not of sufficient power to regulate his life. In his present corrupted state it is too general to afford full direction and too feeble to withstand the opposition of contrary principles in his nature.<sup>7</sup> Unless men were endowed by nature with some sense of duty or moral obligation, they could never reap any benefit from revelation. They would remain incapable of all religion whatever. They who from a mistaken zeal for the honor of divine revelation deny the existence of or vilify the authority of natural religion are not aware that by disallowing the sense of obligation, they undermine the foundation on which revelation builds its power of commanding

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1. Vol. V, p. 163.

from both the Erskines.

4. Vol. II, p. 270.

total depravity is not as strong as in the case of the Erskines.

6. Vol. I, p. 180.

2. Vol. II, p. 285. In this he differed

3. Vol. II, pp. 202, 253.

5. Vol. II, p. 33. The doctrine of

7. Vol. I, pp. 12, 277, 348, 349.

the heart.<sup>1</sup>

Fallen creatures are undergoing in this world probation and trial for their recovery.<sup>2</sup> He, who lives in the exercise of good affections and in the regular discharge of its offices of virtue and piety, maintains as far as his infirmity allows conformity with the nature of that perfect Being whose benevolence, purity, and rectitude are so conspicuous.<sup>3</sup> Thus in the present fallen state and imbecility of human nature he is the worthiest person who is guilty of the fewest offenses towards God and man.<sup>4</sup> But our duties and virtues are all imperfect till enlightened by the principles of the Christian religion.<sup>5</sup> All these principles and doctrines peculiar to the gospel are great improvements on what the light of nature had imperfectly suggested.<sup>6</sup>

While man was in such a miserable state, the Son of God descended from heaven to be the light of men.<sup>7</sup> His coming was twofold: to make expiation to divine justice, by His suffering and death, for the guilt of the human race; and to act as the enlightener and reformer of the world, by His doctrine and life.<sup>8</sup> He was God and man. His divine nature could suffer no real depression nor receive any additional advancement. And though He was not liable to any temptations arising from depravity of nature, yet He was perpetually exposed to such as arise from situations the most adverse to virtue.<sup>9</sup>

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1. Vol. I, pp. 350, 351. In this he is perhaps striking at men like Ralph. 2. Vol. I, p. 391. 3. Vol. V, p. 163.  
 4. Vol. V, p. 270. Ralph would never have agreed with this.  
 5. Vol. I, p. 21. 6. Vol. II, p. 404. 7. Vol. I, pp. 181, 182, 211.  
 8. Vol. V, p. 45. 9. Vol. V, p. 296; Vol. II, p. 115.

The guilt of man must be expiated by suffering. Thus Christ must suffer and die. His death shows us the forfeit of guilt paid by a divine person in our behalf.<sup>1</sup> By His more important death Christ terminated the labors of His important life. In His death He atoned for the guilt of mankind; He accomplished prophecies, types, and symbols, which had been carried on through a series of ages; He concluded the old and introduce the new dispensation of religion; He triumphed over the world, death, and hell; He erected His everlasting spiritual kingdom.<sup>2</sup> The efficacy of this sacrifice reaches back to the first transgression of man and extends forward to the end of time, for from the cross as from an high altar the blood flowed which washed away the guilt of the nations.<sup>3</sup> There was an efficacy in His sufferings far beyond that of mere example and instruction.<sup>4</sup> And let us not imagine that our present discoveries unfold the whole influence of the death of Christ.<sup>5</sup>

From Christ's blood flow both the atonement of human guilt and the regeneration of human nature.<sup>6</sup> In order to be qualified for heaven, human nature must undergo a change so great as to receive in Scripture the appellation of a new birth.<sup>7</sup> Through the intervention of Christ the image of God is restored, man is said to be regenerated, and in some degree he is restored to that connection with God which blessed his primeval state.<sup>8</sup>

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1. Vol. II, p. 217.      2. Vol. I, p. 108.      3. Vol. I,  
p. 112.      4. Vol. I, p. 114.      5. Ibid. This possibility  
is recognized by neither of the Erskines.      6. Vol. II,  
pp. 217, 250.      7. Vol. II, pp. 249, 250.      8. Vol. V,  
p. 163.



This regeneration is accomplished on man's part by means of faith or coming to Christ. In Scripture this includes the whole of religious principles respecting God and Christ.<sup>1</sup> It is resorting to Christ as our declared Master and acknowledging ourselves to be His disciples, believers in His doctrine, and followers of His precepts.<sup>2</sup> It imports not only submission to His instructions, but confidence also in His power to save.<sup>3</sup> The error of resting wholly on faith or wholly on works for salvation, however, is one of those seductions which most easily mislead men, under the semblance of piety on the one hand and of virtue on the other.<sup>4</sup>

The foundation of conduct is to be laid in faith in Christ as Savior of the world, through whose merits only can we look for final acceptance with God. We must, however, evince the sincerity of our faith by good works.<sup>5</sup> The Christian faith is not just a system of speculative truths nor is it only a lesson of moral instruction.<sup>6</sup> The great design of all the knowledge which God has afforded us is to fit us for discharging the duties of life.<sup>7</sup> That religion chiefly consists in an inward principle of goodness and that its value and efficacy are derived from its effects in purifying the heart and reforming the life are beyond dispute.<sup>8</sup> The moral regulation of our thoughts is the particular test of our reverence for God.<sup>9</sup>

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1. Vol. IV, p. 36.      2. Vol. IV, p. 83.      3. Vol. IV, p. 84.  
 4. Vol. III, p. 329.      5. Vol. V, p. 184.  
 6. Vol. I, pp. 3, 133.      7. Vol. I, pp. 102, 103.  
 8. Vol. IV, p. 205.      9. Vol. II, p. 36.

Withdraw the Christian faith and you shake all the pillars of morality. The proper motive for good works is only supplied by it.<sup>1</sup> Every doctrine which proceeds from God will undoubtedly breathe benevolence and humanity.<sup>2</sup> The gospel represents religion as intended for the benefit of human society and not for a retreat from the world.<sup>3</sup> In religious conduct the fundamental and most important article is sincerity of heart and goodness of intention.<sup>4</sup> The man of integrity makes it his constant rule to follow the road of duty according to the word of God and the voice of conscience.<sup>5</sup> The feeling of imitating God is a strong motive for good works.<sup>6</sup> In God's sight it is not so much what we perform as the motive that moves us that constitutes us good or evil.<sup>7</sup>

To aid believers in the Christian life, God has provided prayer, praise, and the ordinances of the Christian faith.<sup>8</sup> Prayer and worship are required not for the sake of God, who can be rendered no more glorious, but for our sakes, that we may be made better; not in working a change upon God, but upon ourselves.<sup>9</sup> It is not for the sake of our asking that God grants the requests we make, but our asking with the proper disposition produces that frame of mind which qualifies us to receive.<sup>10</sup>

Revelation gives full assurance in belief of immortality. Reason suggests many arguments in behalf of it.<sup>11</sup> Among these

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1. Vol. I, p. 9.      2. Vol. III, p. 21.      3. Vol. III, p. 162.  
 4. Vol. V, p. 182.      5. Vol. IV, p. 289.  
 6. Vol. I, p. 18.      7. Vol. II, p. 30.      8. Vol. I, p. 268.  
 9. Vol. I, p. 14; Vol. II, pp. 87, 88.  
 10. Vol. V, p. 412.      11. Vol. I, p. 81.

are: (1) The dissolution of the body at death gives no cause for thinking that the soul at the same time perishes or is extinguished. (2) If the soul were to perish when the body dies, the state of man would be altogether unsuitable to the wisdom and perfection of the Author of his being. Man would have been the only creature that seemed to have been made in vain. (3) The confused and promiscuous distribution of good and evil in this life. (4) The belief that has always prevailed among all mankind of the soul's immortality.<sup>1</sup>

The day is coming when the globe shall either return into its ancient chaos, or, like a fallen star, shall be effaced from the universe, and its place shall know it no more.<sup>2</sup> However, the day of death is to every individual the same as the day of the dissolution of the world.<sup>3</sup> Then comes the judgment, where we have all reason to believe that what the great Judge will chiefly regard is the habitual prevailing turn of our heart and life and how far we have been actuated by a sincere desire to do our duty.<sup>4</sup>

The silence of humble and respectful hope concerning the future life better becomes us than the indulgence of those excursions of fancy which degrade the subject they endeavor to exalt.<sup>5</sup> Still, we know with certainty that heaven will be where there is complete virtue and order, and wherever these are found, the most perfect sources are opened of joy and bliss.<sup>6</sup> Heaven

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1. Vol. I, pp. 416 ff; Vol. V, pp. 216 ff. 2. Vol. III, p. 391. 3. Vol. III, p. 400. 4. Vol. V, p. 449. Neither of the Erskines would have agreed with this. 5. Vol. II, p. 244. 6. Vol. III, p. 398.

implies a society, and the felicity of that society is constituted by the perfection of love and goodness flowing from the presence of the God of love.<sup>1</sup> On earth that progress is commenced which is more successfully carried on in heaven.<sup>2</sup>

On the misery prepared for the reprobates it would be shocking to dwell, and it would, in a high degree, be improper and presumptuous in us to descant on the degree and duration of those punishments which infinite justice and wisdom may see cause to inflict on the incurably wicked.<sup>3</sup> Hell, however, is at least the region of fierceness and animosity.<sup>4</sup> God will judge according to the degree of light that was afforded, according to the means of knowledge and improvement placed in our hands. He will not exact from any man what was never given him.<sup>5</sup>

No doubt questions have arisen concerning such matters as the creation of the world from nothing, the origin of evil under the government of a perfect Being, and the consistency of human liberty with divine prescience. These are of as difficult solution and of as intricate nature as any questions in theology. But we are not admitted into all the secrets of Providence, any more than into the mysteries of the Godhead.<sup>6</sup>

In conclusion, the following are observations on the theology of his sermons.

First, regarding his use of theology. Blair's doctrinal sermons contain the longest treatments of particular points,

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1. Vol. IV, p. 138.      2. Vol. V, p. 167.      3. Vol. V, p. 452. In this he differs from both of the Erskines.  
 4. Vol. I, p. 152.      5. Vol. V, p. 449.  
 6. Vol. III, p. 347.

though statements of doctrine occur frequently throughout his sermons. These latter, however, are usually short and are rarely enlarged upon. At times, a sense of doctrine, even in the background, is missing. There are few attempts at exact theological explanation. He avoids technical terms and is content with a rather popular and rational presentation of his doctrine. He uses theology to furnish comfort, inspiration, and guidance in daily life. Occasionally, it is used to provide motivation for Christian conduct or as a statement of positive Christian truth.

Secondly, and differing from the Erskines, his primary emphasis is not on the free grace of God, though this is present. If there is any central theme that pervades his sermons, it is that of the character necessary for the Christian believer: a proper concept of God, a proper concept of man's nature, proper motivation, and proper destination.

Thirdly, Marrow doctrine has no place, and covenant theology is minimized.

Fourthly, total depravity is the only one of the disputed points of Calvinism that receives attention. Little or nothing of election, a limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance. On the whole, Blair expounds the traditional theology less dogmatically and less emphatically.

Fifthly, he argues mainly against those who denounced Chris-

tian doctrine and principles as irrational. He holds to and defends his faith, at the same time trying to make it appealing to men in a critical and rational age.

Sixthly, he differs from the Erskines not so much in what he says as in what he does not stress.

## CHAPTER VII

### Their Relationship to the Times

Having discussed the homiletics and the doctrinal content of the sermons of Ralph Erskine, John Erskine, and Hugh Blair, we turn now to consider a third aspect: their interest in, and application to, the events and conditions of the day in which they lived, either in condemnation, approbation, or observation.

#### RALPH ERSKINE

The purpose or aim of a man's preaching largely determines the extent to which such application is present. Ralph Erskine states in several places what his own purpose is. He says that "the gospel I desire to preach, is, will you have a Christ to work faith, repentance, love, and all good in you, and to stand between you and the sword of divine wrath?"<sup>1</sup> His principal work was to win souls and gather people to Christ. Ministers "are to preach Christ, to proclaim Christ, to offer Christ, to invite sinners to Christ, and that is all they can do."<sup>2</sup> Or, as he says in another place,

...that which a gospel-minister especially aims at, is, to get people pure in the sight of God. He cannot satisfy himself merely in preaching up good works, and charity, piety, devotion, mercy, tenderness, honesty, civility,

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1. Vol. I, p. 52.

2. Vol. III, p. 300.

morality, etc. which is very commendable; and would to God there were more of these; but he goes farther and labours principally to get the foundation of true holiness laid in the heart, self-purity mortified, the principles rectified, and Christ formed in the heart.<sup>1</sup>

In view of this, it was quite natural that 'free grace' would be the central theme of Erskine's preaching.

But while this is his primary aim, he states also "that it is the duty of ministers to meddle sometimes in public matters, whether in church and state," for it is "a part of ministers' work, to testify against sin in all."<sup>2</sup> In another place he says, "God never warranted any...to keep silence as not to speak against the evils and errors of the times."<sup>3</sup> Working from this premise, he justifies his departures into the realm of the social, political, and ecclesiastical matters of his day.

Erskine was a thorough-going pessimist. There was nothing good about the times in which he lived. In sermon after sermon he bemoans the sins and evils of his times. From his earliest till his last there is constant complaint about the sad state of affairs. So much wickedness and so little holiness.<sup>4</sup> Atheism and wickedness, profanity and ungodliness, laxness and looseness, lasciviousness and hypocrisy overran the world.<sup>5</sup> There was universal unholiness and apostasy.<sup>6</sup> It was an adulterous, sinful, backsliding, impure generation.<sup>7</sup> "Perhaps there was never a generation wherein the strength and dominion of sin did more discover itself, in the life and conversation of the people,

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1. Vol. I, p. 429.      2. Vol. VI, pp. 117, 118.      3. Vol. VI, p. 137; Vol. VII, p. 281.      4. Vol. I, p. 221; Vol. VI, p. 283; Vol. VII, p. 246.      5. Vol. II, pp. 113, 233, 234, 243; Vol. V, pp. 98, 255; Vol. VI, p. 63.      6. Vol. VI, p. 22; Vol. I, p. 261.      7. Vol. VIII, pp. 395, 490.



than in this present age."<sup>1</sup> "Perhaps there was never greater evils of one sort and another taking place in the world, and even in the midst of the visible church, than now-a-days."<sup>2</sup> And, "perhaps, multitudes of impure and unsanctified sinners were never greater than at this day wherein we live."<sup>3</sup> Sinners were having their day. It was now their hour and that of the power of darkness.<sup>4</sup> "O! what a Sodom is the present generation!"<sup>5</sup> A thousand times worse, however, with respect to sins against law and gospel-light, which Sodom never had.<sup>6</sup>

Because of the extent of sin, the times looked as if they might be the very last.<sup>7</sup> The judgment of God was ready to fall at any moment. Days of "dreadful calamity, and storms, wrath and indignation are hastening on."<sup>8</sup>

There is a cloud of wrath gathering over Britain; a cloud of judgment and calamity is gathering over Scotland, and hath been gathering these many years bygone, especially since the time that Scotland was incorporate with her neighbour; a cloud of wrath hath been gathering over us, both as a church and nation.<sup>9</sup>

Already the judgment of God has been seen, not only in the death of many of the faithful, but also in the departure of His divine glory, the wide rent and division of the church, the sinking and impoverishing of the state, besides many temporal judgments, intestine flames, insurrections, sword, poverty, slavery, and more especially spiritual judgments.<sup>10</sup>

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1. Vol. V, p. 1.      2. Vol. IX, p. 84.      3. Vol. I, p. 381.  
 Cf. Vol. I, p. 306; Vol. II, p. 316; Vol. VIII, p. 42.  
 4. Vol. I, p. 262.      5. Vol. II, p. 362; Vol. VI, p. 217.  
 6. Ibid.      7. Vol. I, p. 262; Vol. VI, p. 121.      8. Vol.  
 VII, p. 400; Vol. I, p. 327; Vol. II, p. 362.      9. Vol. III,  
 p. 453.      10. Vol. II, p. 243; Vol. III, p. 453.

Sins of all kinds met with stern rebuke in his sermons. Several times he mentions lists of the various sins which beset his day and generation.<sup>1</sup> In general, these may be grouped into two classes: some may be termed 'social' sins; others may be called 'spiritual' sins.

Among the first class are: Adultery--"a generation of vile whoremongers, and adulterers, and unclean persons...to whom the custom of the sin hath worn out the conscience of the guilt."<sup>2</sup> Swearing--"a generation of horrid swearers, and profaners of the name of God, whether by broad oaths, or minched oaths: not to insist upon the open perjury, by the abominable use and abuse of state-oaths."<sup>3</sup>

Some profane his name, making it a by-word, by which they give vent to their exorbitant passions, and fill up the vacancy of other idle words. Not only is the name of God thus abused by those who belch out their bloody oaths... but also, by those who mention the name of God slightly, or irreverently, in their ordinary conversation.<sup>4</sup>

Sabbath-breaking--"a generation of Sabbath-breakers, by whom God's holy day is as little hallowed...as any other day; though they come to the church for the fashion; yet they do not make conscience to abstain from thinking their own thoughts, speaking their own words, or doing their own works on the Lord's day."<sup>5</sup>

Drunkenness and tippling--"if the generation had a right and lawful love to themselves, either soul or body, they would

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1. Vol. I, pp. 59-64, 162-163, 205, 343-351, 450, 467; Vol. II, p. 416; Vol. IV, p. 441; Vol. VII, p. 125; Vol. VIII, p. 39.  
 2. Vol. I, p. 349.                      3. Ibid.                      4. Vol. I, p. 234.  
 5. Vol. I, p. 349; Vol. II, p. 115.

not destroy their bodies by intemperance and insobriety...."<sup>1</sup>  
 Lying--"a generation of liars who make no conscience of speaking the truth to their neighbour."<sup>2</sup> Gossiping--"a generation of malicious persons and fire-brands, living...in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another: loving to have an idle tale to tell, and an evil report to make to one another."<sup>3</sup>  
 Robbery, cheating, oppression--

a generation of unjust and injurious persons, who think nothing to build up their own worldly fortune upon the ruin of their neighbour's estate...Of the same nature is injustice in judging and determining of causes, at whatsoever court, whether civil or ecclesiastic, when friendship and courtesy is preferred above justice and equity; and when the decision of judges goes not by justice, but by favour, or fraud, or bribery.<sup>4</sup>

Suicide--many are left under the power and violence of this temptation.<sup>5</sup> Luxury and idleness--a novelty of disposition abounds that makes multitudes fall in with every new, vain fashion, of gesture, ways of carrying that discover nothing but levity and are expressly condemned in Scripture. There are vain fashions of apparel inconsistent with, and unsuitable to, the rules of modesty, that many affect, contrary to the word of God. This is an epidemical disease of both sexes.<sup>6</sup>

But he grows more specific at times. He condemns the many clubs and cabals of the day as sinful, drunken, tippling, idle, and debauched gatherings. Also the people who attended them.<sup>7</sup> He condemns many forms of entertainment. "Oh! how little of

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1. Vol. I, pp. 349, 428.      2. Vol. I, p. 349.      3. Vol. I, pp. 257, 350.  
 4. Vol. I, p. 350.      5. Vol. VI, p. 480.  
 6. Vol. I, p. 451.      7. Vol. III, p. 443.

God is in the midst of men's hunting and hawking, diceing and carding, drinking, dancing, ranting, and revelling!"<sup>1</sup> And he says also, "...pity the world that know no better happiness than good meat and brave clothes; that know no better enjoyment than caballing, eating, drinking, dancing, roaring, dicing, carding, hunting, gaming."<sup>2</sup>

He speaks out against the cities, making Edinburgh his point of departure. O Edinburgh! Cities are destroyed by their luxury and wantonness; by their oppression of the poor, their racking of rents, their injustice and fraudulent dealings between man and man; by neglect of family worship; by slighting the warnings of the word and despising faithful messengers they have among them; by murder and bloodshed; by whoredom and adultery; by Sabbath-breaking; by their abuse of plenty.<sup>3</sup>

In another place he notes that a market is to be held, and he says that in view of this, "I shall tell you what are the sinful ways that people take in buying and selling, which declare they are not walking in Christ": disparaging and underrating what they are to buy; praising and over-valuing what they are to sell; abusing men's simplicity and unskilfulness, and using false weights, balances, and measures to deceive; setting the goodliest face of their wares outmost.<sup>4</sup>

But the matter that he considers most fully in any sermon is that of a dance or ball which was to take place in Dunfer-

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1. Vol. V, p. 348.      2. Vol. IV, p. 407.      3. Vol. VII, pp. 160 ff.      4. Vol. III, p. 282; Vol. I, pp. 348, 349.

line. He begins by saying,

I understand there is to be a remarkable meeting here this week; an idle, vain rendezvous; I know not upon what pretence: but I fear the motto of it be, Vanity and Folly; if not Wickedness and Debauchery in the issue: and in case that prove the issue of it, I must exoner myself on the head. True; some may be thinking, it is better that the minister hold his peace; for, say what he will, the company will but laugh at it, when they are convened: But I do not value that; I must answer to God for what I say, and you must answer for what you hear and do at his tribunal; and see who will laugh there.

Then he proceeds to propose certain questions regarding the morality of such a dance. If they can be answered positively, he has no quarrel with it. If not, then he protests against it.

Why, say you, it is but designed for a little diversion and recreation. Indeed, it is easy for persons to put a fair face upon a foul design: but I fear the promiscuous dancing and revelling that I hear is designed, together with the drinking and carousing that may take place, will discover that the god of this world will be the great master-convener, and the lusts of the world will be the great diversion...A meeting for prayer and humiliation would be more suitable for the sad state of the souls of many of those who have such designs in view.<sup>1</sup>

These are the sorts of 'social' sins against which he frequently spoke out. But the occasions of his greatest rebuke were the 'spiritual' sins of his day.

One prevalent 'spiritual' sin was heresy and error, of which mention has been made in the previous chapter. This is a day, he says, wherein many sacred truths are publicly defamed and ridiculed, and heart-enemies to the gospel and revealed religion take occasion utterly to run down the gospel.<sup>2</sup> But we

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1. Vol. I, pp. 468, 469.

2. Vol. I, p. 262.

show no mercy on the generation which is to come after us, if we do not transmit truth purely to them, as it was by our forefathers to us, at the expense of their blood.<sup>1</sup> "...if we look into the church, even the purest churches in this world, among which, I would fain hope, the poor Church of Scotland hath not yet lost the vogue," how many dark and confused notions of Christ may be discovered among these supposedly pure, Christian, Protestant, and reformed churches! It were endless to speak of the doctrinal and practical error that swarm in the churches.<sup>2</sup> This is the dangerous circumstance of England and Scotland in our day. What errors are spreading! Atheism is in a manner professed by a number of graceless wits that call themselves free-thinkers. Deism is openly professed by some. Arianism has taken root. Legalism, Libertinism, and Arminianism abound.<sup>3</sup>

In the years following the Marrow controversy his sermons were full of the Marrow doctrine. He continually defended his views and attacked his opponents.

In one sermon he says that

certain things have passed concerning the Truths of God, and the Righteousness of Christ in our day, which some think will stand infamous till the judgment of the great day; and this Truth and Righteousness, being the great ministerial trust, some chused rather to be reproached by the world, than be challenged by God and their own conscience, as betrayers of their trust.<sup>4</sup>

He goes on, in another sermon, to say that although some, for maintaining the faith of our forefathers, have been calumniated

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1. Vol. II, p. 171.

2. Vol. IV, p. 67.

3. Vol. VI, pp. 125, 126; Vol. IV, pp. 45, 70; Vol. VII, p. 56.

4. Vol. II, p. 172.

as if they were bringing in new schemes of doctrine, he could show how some, in opposition to them, have brought in strange opinions never before heard of in this church, such as gospel-repentance before faith and justification.<sup>1</sup> Those "that reproachfully charge the doctrine of grace, as a covert to sin; and the preachers of it, as if they were enemies to holiness; do but grossly betray their ignorance of the gospel...."<sup>2</sup> Our doctrine of

dying to the law, in point of justification, is a doctrine according to godliness, and the very means of holiness itself, and of living unto God: if this be Antinomianism, I am content to be called Antinomian. But we see who are indeed Antinomians, and enemies to the law and holiness; even all those who oppose this doctrine, whereby we give the law all the honour imaginable.<sup>3</sup>

When a church has gone off from any ancient truth, or old way of expressing it, no sooner are these old truths revived, or set in their ancient frame, than presently it is called a new scheme of doctrine.<sup>4</sup> So now the gospel-scheme is under reproach as if it were a new scheme, and some preach and write and reason against it as if it were Antinomian and a going off from the law. What is the matter? A hellish, unholy, legal spirit reigns in the world.<sup>5</sup>

I know, he says, I need to be cautious what I say in this captious age, especially upon such a subject as death to the law.<sup>6</sup> People are making mock of Christ's messengers when they

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1. Vol. III, p. 4; Vol. II, p. 13. Cf. Vol. I, pp. 47, 52; Vol. II, pp. 37, 188; Vol. III, p. 113; Vol. V, pp. 40, 86, 142, 208.  
 2. Vol. II, p. 189. Cf. Vol. I, pp. 211, 221; Vol. II, p. 328; Vol. III, pp. 15, 38; Vol. IV, p. 216. 3. Vol. II, pp. 313, 314.  
 4. Vol. IV, p. 71; Vol. II, pp. 402, 403; Vol. III, p. 40.  
 5. Vol. II, p. 334; Vol. I, p. 213.  
 6. Vol. II, p. 266; Vol. I, p. 249; Vol. III, p. 18.

preach the doctrines of grace, but I seek no further evidence of an enemy of Christ than that.<sup>1</sup>

Another error was Arianism. Some tell us that it is even creeping into Scotland as well as it is raging in England and Ireland.<sup>2</sup> This spreading of Arianism in Britain and Ireland is like pulling up the Reformation by the roots. If this error be subtly maintained among us, pray that God may discover and destroy it.<sup>3</sup> In 1728, he said that if God did not have infinite patience, "he could not have borne so long with the high affronts, which have been of late cast upon his supreme Deity in Britain and Ireland, and even in the church of Scotland also; wherein the groundless noise and outcry of novelties of doctrine, and dangerous Antinomianism, is, in the righteous providence of God, like to be drowned with a more hideous noise of damnable Arianism."<sup>4</sup>

Still another error was that of Papist doctrine, together with the prelatic ceremonies of the churches of both Rome and England.

...alas! what a lamentable thing it is...that this damnable doctrine spreads so much even in this island; particularly in the north of Scotland, where, we understand, the popish mass is as solemnly celebrate, as we attend upon these divine ordinances. And as Episcopacy was the very groundwork, and foundation-stone, upon which popery was at first erected; so, what matter of lamentation is it, that popish ceremonies, maintained in the Episcopal church, are so much affected...?<sup>5</sup>

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1. Vol. II, p. 45; Vol. IV, p. 221. 2. Vol. IV, p. 66;  
Vol. II, p. 372; Vol. III, pp. 431, 453. 3. Vol. IV, p.  
373. 4. Vol. V, pp. 172, 285, 310. This was at the time  
of the second Simson trial. 5. Vol. I, pp. 233, 235.



Cursed Popery and abjured Prelacy are making inroads upon all corners of the land in the public view of the church. Yet she, unthoughtful of her danger, seems to be doing nothing but having intestine broils.<sup>1</sup> Many are embracing the abjured English popish ceremonies and new modes of divine service which have no stamp of divine authority upon them. We should pity and pray for those who are fond of such a yoke and that this generation may not run wholly back to Rome.<sup>2</sup> Abjured superstitious worship and English popish ceremonies are even set up in several places of the nation.<sup>3</sup> It is remarkable that the more carnal the generation is growing, the more are abjured ceremonies creeping in among us and the less testifying against the same.<sup>4</sup>

Because Papists, Socinians, Libertines, Arians, Latitudinarians, Arminians, and Legalists possess an anti-Christian spirit, they are to be debarred from communion.<sup>5</sup>

Another 'spiritual' sin, besides heresy and error, which he greatly condemns, is enmity to the work of a covenanted reformation in the land. In the midst of the sins of his day he glances backwards to the Golden Age of religion in Scotland when the covenants held their sway over the life of the people and nation. That was the time that Scotland had its greatest glory and its happiest days. Then the church thrived. Empty forms, superstitious ceremonies, and human inventions were cut short. They were renounced and abjured. All ranks of the peo-

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1. Vol. I, p. 262.

110, 270.  
pp. 5, 67.

2. Vol. IV, pp. 155, 287; Vol. III, pp.

3. Vol. VI, p. 28; Vol. I, p. 311; Vol. III,

4. Vol. II, p. 187.

5. Vol. I, pp. 46, 47.

ple were brought into holy and solemn covenants with God, and in those days the Lord delighted in Scotland, and the land was married to Him. Our reformation days and covenanting days, he says, were joyful to the church, for a nation, as it were, was born of her at once. The Lord owned our solemn covenanting days, and then He put forth His power.<sup>1</sup>

That people were neglecting and despising the covenanted work of reformation was the great sin of the day.<sup>2</sup> When our forefathers swore to the covenants, we swore as well as they, and we are obliged to stand to it though it were never so many years after. We are partakers of the benefits obtained, and so we are bound to perform that which they promised to do.<sup>3</sup> Yet we, their ungrateful posterity, are either forgetting the labors of our covenanting reformers and purest assemblies or else are casting a reproach upon them as if they had been led more by frenzy than true zeal.<sup>4</sup> Instead of recognizing our sin and defection, we rather justify them as if no wrong was done and as if matters had never been better.<sup>5</sup> But to disparage these covenants and to deny the obligation of them is to cast dung upon our glory.<sup>6</sup>

O ungrateful Scotland! How have we forgotten our solemn allegiance to our glorious Deliverer! How Scotland has been destroying herself since our glorious Reformation! Particularly by breaking our national covenants with God, by burning our covenants with the King of kings and giving sacrilegious homage to

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1. Vol. I, p. 186; Vol. II, p. 241; Vol. III, pp. 372, 373; Vol. IV, pp. 152, 218, 261; Vol. V, p. 204. 2. Vol. VIII, p. 52; Vol. V, p. 204. 3. Vol. VIII, pp. 52, 53. 4. Vol. IV, p. 218. 5. Vol. III, p. 373; Vol. II, p. 402. 6. Vol. IV, p. 484.

the kings of the earth as if they had been supreme over all persons and in all causes, and by neglecting at the merciful Revolution the fairest opportunity of reviving a covenanted Reformation and rebuilding the house upon the right foundation.<sup>1</sup> O may not our hearts bleed to think of our defection from old covenanted principles and violation of engagements, all without being duly lamented and testified against. Is it any wonder that the infamy and loss of honor and respect in this world, mentioned in the covenant, has come upon us, while our honor as a nation and glory as a church is sunk into the horrible pit and filthy mire?<sup>2</sup> The credit of ministers and people, nation and church, is sunk into the depth of defection, division, error, security, and carnal compliances.<sup>3</sup> O cry for the return of reformation days!<sup>4</sup>

Those who are guilty of making light of the solemn covenants and of the covenanted work of reformation are to be debarred from communion.<sup>5</sup> In fact, how can one truly stand for the cause of Christ in a day of Scotland's defection unless they can say that the covenanted Reformation doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the church of Scotland is the work of God and founded upon His word, and they have no doubt in their hearts to the contrary.<sup>6</sup>

Because of this national apostasy from the work of reformation, this covenant-breaking, this perjury, many judgments are

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1. Vol. VI, p. 69; Vol. VII, p. 154.      2. Vol. I, p. 186.

3. Vol. II, pp. 113, 402.      4. Vol. III, p. 372.

5. Vol. I, p. 63.      6. Vol. VI, p. 136; Vol. VIII, pp. 128, 238.

come upon us, and many sad tokens of judgments a-coming. Instead of a gathering of people to Christ, we see more and more national bondage and thralldom taking place.<sup>1</sup> "I think, we particularly, who preach the gospel unto you, would not be faithful if we did not warn you that Scotland is in danger of God's wrath, as long as there is any standing acts of the national church, contradictory to, and inconsistent with the National Covenant."<sup>2</sup> Such is the universal corruption of church and state, such has been our perjury and covenant-breaking and bloodshed unrepented of, and such is the profanity, error, and blasphemy of the day we live in, that we may expect a terrible day of the outpouring of blood. Our national sins are crying for bloody vengeance, and many see it hastening on.<sup>3</sup> A flood of wrath is coming on. Oh! consider the circumstances of the day we live in. God is in arms against Britain and Ireland for breach of covenant and perjury.<sup>4</sup>

A third 'spiritual' sin was the neglect of the means and ordinances appointed by God and lukewarmness in His cause.

There is so much indifference, he says, among professed Christians. They are indifferent what way they worship or what way others worship, whether they perform duty or not, whether they attend ordinances or not.<sup>5</sup> There is the neglect of prayer both in private and in the family. Some, indeed, have not so much as the form or shadow of religion either in their families or closets, or they have the shadow of devotion and no more.<sup>6</sup>

1. Vol. II, p. 112; Vol. III, pp. 371-374; Vol. VI, p. 126.

2. Vol. VI, p. 138. 3. Vol. VI, p. 446; Vol. III, p. 453.

4. Vol. VII, p. 453.      5. Vol. I, pp. 337, 338; Vol. II, p. 189.      6. Vol. I, pp. 216, 450, 467.

6. Vol. I, pp. 216, 450, 467.

There is neglect of the services of the church. Some attend only because they would not be thought worse than their neighbours; some for diversion; some because they are only waiting on their master or mistress; some because their friends are going; some for curiosity's sake, having heard of the minister; some try to catch the minister; some only to gape for remarkable phrases; some only to hear the minister expose the sins of others; some to observe the dress or behavior of others; some only to muse or dream.<sup>1</sup> Sabbaths and sermons are a weariness, prayer and praise a burden.<sup>2</sup> There is a gentle or rather a deistical fashion among some in our day, in public ordinances, they do not open their mouths to sing with the congregation.<sup>3</sup> Fellowship meetings have been deserted, and Christian societies have disappeared.<sup>4</sup> How many officers and elders live very loosely and neglect the worship of God in their families!<sup>5</sup>

There is a lack of zeal. Neutrality and indifference under the names of moderation, good-breeding, and the like. Perhaps there was never colder air than that which the present generation breathes, in love to God and His people and zeal for His glory.<sup>6</sup> There is compromise with evil. Some officers and elders who sit in the National Assembly join with the church of England in their superstitious worship when they are in that nation, to the reproach of their Presbyterian profession.<sup>7</sup> Even great men, nobility, and gentry are left of God. Look to

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1. Vol. III, pp. 428, 429.

p. 164; Vol. I, p. 261.

III, p. 472.

Vol. II, p. 243.

2. Vol. II, p. 189; Vol. III,

3. Vol. II, p. 107.

4. Vol.

5. Vol. VI, p. 28.

6. Vol. VI, p. 396;

7. Vol. VI, p. 28.

the great men of our day, and you will see that the generality of the nobility of Scotland and England think very little of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Most of such lukewarmness is due to the fear of ridicule. Many dare not abstain from swearing, tippling, drinking, or betake themselves to serious religion, or worship God in their families, for fear of being scoffed at, scorned, and persecuted. Spiritual conversation about Christ is much out of fashion in this degenerate age. Indeed,

I have heard of Glasgow, that some time ago it hath been like a Goshen for religion, when men could not walk almost through the streets of it, without hearing the morning and evening sound of family worship on week-days, as well as Sabbath-days; but I have also heard, that now it is degenerate to an Egypt of gross darkness, error, irreligion, and ungodliness; an Egypt where a number of God's people, that desire to see reformation work reviving, have been long<sup>2</sup> oppressed, scattered, reproached, and kept in bondage....<sup>2</sup>

And yet, "If you think it ill-breeding, or ungentle manners, as many do, to speak of Christ and spiritual things, and cannot drop a word for him from Sabbath to Sabbath, who can believe that you think highly of Christ?"<sup>3</sup>

However, he centers most of his criticisms on the church of Scotland itself. He comments on various ecclesiastical events as they happened and constantly bemoans the sad condition of the church. Notice has been taken of some of his remarks that were made in the years following the Marrow controversy. In one sermon during that time, however, he exhibits

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1. Vol. II, p. 244; Vol. IV, p. 48; Vol. VII, p. 96; Vol. VIII, p. 242.      2. Vol. VIII, p. 71.      3. Vol. IV, p. 80; Vol. II, pp. 196, 197; Vol. V, p. 277; Vol. IX, p. 316.

quite a spirit of tolerance, for he says that

as I do not desire to be like those, that think all Blackamoors except themselves; so I presume, that the judgment of the generality of the church of Scotland is to be gathered from the public Standards of doctrine, in our Confession, and Catechisms, deliberately enacted by this church, and to which all profess adherence; and not from any particular Acts relative to doctrine, either made by an oversight, or maintained by mere human authority. And therefore, whatever may be the dangerous consequence of public deeds of that nature; yet, I entertain charity for the most part of the ministers of the church of Scotland, that the latter Acts, that seem to clash with our Standards, hath nothing of their deliberate approbation. However, the least truth ought to be sacred to every one of us... for, the loss of the least truth whether you reckon it fundamental or not, is of dangerous consequence.<sup>1</sup>

When the second form of the Abjuration oath was imposed, it was made by some almost a term of communion, and so he comments on "the present rent among us." He says, further, that it is plain that God is angry with us and has divided us because we have sinned and not been valiant for the truth and as zealous for the covenanted work of reformation as we should have been. It is a time of great darkness in the church, a time of great division and contention.<sup>2</sup>

By 1730, the violent settling of churches had already begun, and in the few years following, especially 1732, the matter of intrusion called forth many severe remarks. It was tyranny over the souls and consciences of men to thrust pastors upon them without their consent and election. Such a patron must be gratified or such a great man must be pleased, for the church cannot stand without the support of such pillars.<sup>3</sup> But it is the law

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1. Vol. III, p. 119.

2. Vol. I, pp. 104, 112.

3. Vol. II, p. 190.

of God's house that neither prince, patron, nor heritor, as denominate only from their temporal estate, shall have power over God's house, choosing and electing their spiritual servants and officers to the exclusion of the voice and vote of the proper members of the family. Yet the law is manifestly violated by some late Acts in our day.<sup>1</sup> Heritors, if they be but Protestant in profession, though they be Pagan in practice, are in our day declared to be members of God's spiritual house.<sup>2</sup> So God's people are robbed of the right to choose their own pastors, a right which our church by her books of discipline asserts belongs to them by the warrant of God's word. But our defection and recession from the good old way in this matter has come to a height by several steps--commenced in the Assembly of 1649, confirmed and advanced in the parliament of 1690, and now in some way completed in the Assembly of 1732, as it never was before by any deed of the church.<sup>3</sup> It was never a point of debate in our reforming times, he says, that ministers were to be settled by the call and consent of the people, but now it is turned to a debatable point.<sup>4</sup> The poor scattered flocks of Scotland have been crying to the judicatories for help, in vain, though they are oppressed with the violent obtrusion of hirelings upon them.<sup>5</sup>

Within the years 1732-1738, before the final action against the Secession was commenced, one notices condemnation mingled with tolerance and patience in Erskine's attitude towards the

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1. Vol. VI, pp. 27, 28, 111, 139; Vol. VII, p. 124.      2. Vol. VI, p. 26.      3. Vol. VI, p. 69.      4. Vol. VI, p. 138.  
5. Vol. VII, p. 171.



### Established Church.

In days like ours, he says, Synods and General Assemblies have become most unholy. Surely the house of God in our day is a ruinous house and needs to be repaired and reformed.<sup>1</sup> When the children have pleaded with their mother in our day for the redress of grievances, she has given a deaf ear and deeper wounds.<sup>2</sup> Many true friends of Presbytery are on the borders of separating from this established church upon a disgust at the defections of the day, and this is to be lamented. As matters stand in the church of Scotland at present, we seem to be on the brink of a schism. But,

whatever tenderness I desire to show to weak consciences, in many circumstances, I have never as yet, seen ground to preach separation, whatever ground I see to testify against the corruptions and defections of the day, I hope God hath not yet left the house; he is yet to be found in these galleries of his house, the ordinances of his worship. Mean time, I have a concern particularly for these that are mourning over the defections and defilements of the house and keeping the cleanest rooms they can find therein, and whose lot is to have officers obtruded upon them, and have not the gospel, but the law, or mere moral harangues preached to them.<sup>3</sup>

It is the law of God's house that the gospel be maintained with zeal, and damnable doctrine be rejected with indignation. But in our day gospel doctrine has been condemned and darkened, and damnable doctrine such as Arianism slenderly censured, and many corruptions in doctrine either overlooked and tolerated or not sufficiently testified against.<sup>4</sup> We have been most ungrateful to God in neglecting to appoint national fast-days, thanks-

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1. Vol. VI, pp. 14-16, 25.  
3. Vol. VI, pp. 23-25.

2. Vol. VI, pp. 15, 29.  
4. Vol. VI, p. 27.

giving-days, and humiliation-days for our national guilt.<sup>1</sup> Yet for all this, there remains some good in the church of Scotland.<sup>2</sup> And though we should see ministers suspended or deposed for adhering to the testimony of Christ and endeavoring to keep a good conscience in an evil day, let us yet recognize the hand of God working in it all.<sup>3</sup>

His attitude begins to change. How great is the apostasy and defection of the day! If there be any schism or separation in the church of Scotland upon the present emergency, you all will know who will be the schismatics and separatists. Surely not those who sit still and remain steadfast in the faith, but those who go off from our Reformation principles.<sup>4</sup> It is a corrupt kirk and clergy. Matters are running into confusion, church members are betraying the privileges of the church, and the church of Scotland is destroying herself with her own hand.<sup>5</sup> Yet

I will be loth to say, that they are all wicked that justify their sinful proceedings in public matters at this day, and that justify their persecuting rage and anger at their brethren...it is possible that even some, that have met with God, may justify their anger at their brethren, saying, 'We do well to be angry even unto death,' and angry even to suspension, deposition, excommunication. I hope none need be offended, if I have charity for some that are of that opinion, through their ignorant zeal....<sup>6</sup>

But it is indeed a sign that God has left us very far, when Arians and Blasphemers and those guilty of fundamental errors are indulged,<sup>7</sup> and yet those that are the friends of truth are

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1. Vol. VI, pp. 70, 71.  
pp. 108, 109, 112.

2. Vol. VI, p. 30.

3. Vol. VI,

4. Vol. VI, pp. 128, 156.

5. Vol.

Vol. VI, pp. 152, 191, 192, 252.

6. Vol. VI, pp. 232, 233.

7. Referring, no doubt, to Professor Simson.

proceeded against very violently; when a covenanted reformation is sacrificed together with the sacred office of ministers and the spiritual rights of people; and when those that are perhaps the friends and favorites of heaven are cast out of our midst because of their faithful testimony against the evils and defections of the day.<sup>1</sup>

In October 1733, he commented, This may be the last communion you shall have with peace in the church of Scotland. The present emergency may be the beginning of sorrows. Indeed, if matters go on at this rate, if God does not stir up the ensuing Assembly to take course with these disorders, the ruin of the church of Scotland is but beginning.<sup>2</sup> If the devil and his instruments could get their will, you would not enjoy the gospel ministry, and this and some others would have been vacant congregations.<sup>3</sup> There are many in our day who are but ministers of the letter, and these ought not to be encouraged, but beware of deserting a ministry wherein the Spirit of life runs.<sup>4</sup> Grievous defections are breaking out in judicatories which should be lamented over. Dissentions and divisions among ministers and people; the visible glory of the church sadly corrupted with carnal policy; few faithful pastors and people are left; few bear witness; candidates for the ministry are lax and latitudinarian in their principles, affecting new modes of flourishing and haranguing.<sup>5</sup>

After Erskine joined the Associate Presbytery and the final

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1. Vol. VI, p. 254.      2. Vol. VI, pp. 258, 273.      3. Vol. VI, p. 283.      4. Vol. VI, p. 445.      5. Vol. VII, p. 126.

action against the Secession commenced in the Established Church Assembly, his attitude became much more critical and his tone more severe.

Surely, he says, "the Lord is calling us to some other thing, than the present judicatories are doing."<sup>1</sup> Is it not our duty to do what they will not do, to assert and vindicate openly the truth and confess our sins?<sup>2</sup> Is it not our duty to feed Christ's lambs which the judicatories are starving and to gather His scattered flock oppressed by the violent obtrusion of hirelings, and to join hands with these that are willing to be active in this matter? Is it not our duty to testify for Christ when judicatories are unwilling to bear witness for Him, yea, and have thrown faithful testimonies offered to them over the bar, besides refusing instructions, petitions, and a multitude of remonstrances these many years bygone? The work of God should be done, be the consequence what it will, and let men call their practice separation or what they please.<sup>3</sup>

It is lamentable that the corruptions of the times should make necessary the relieving of Christ's oppressed heritage from the violent measures of church judicatories.<sup>4</sup> But when the power of presbytery is employed otherwise than for truth, it is not to be regarded, but to be reckoned null and void, as many pretended acts of judicatories in our day are.<sup>5</sup> Neither are ministers the servants of Christ when they become the servants of

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1. Vol. VII, p. 171.  
411; Vol. VIII, p. 240.  
5. Vol. VII, p. 432.

2. Ibid. 3. Vol. VII, pp. 172,  
4. Vol. VII, p. 422.

kings to read and proclaim their acts and laws which disagree with the acts and laws of heaven, and when they become the servants of patrons and great men.<sup>1</sup>

In a day of general defection we ought to side ourselves by coming out from the corrupt part of a church and testify against them. When defection becomes general, then division becomes a necessary duty and a great mercy. Who are the schismatics and dividers of the church of Scotland? These that adhere to the covenanted reformation thereof, founded on the word of God, or these that are razing the covenanted work of reformation to the ground? Suppose a company walking on a road by the side of a ditch, most of them fall into the ditch, and then cry to their fellows, If you come not here and join with us, we will charge you with schism and division, how ridiculous that would be!<sup>2</sup> Those that were appearing for the cause of God have been cut off and cast out of the synagogue. God's people in Scotland have been under great bondage and grievous oppression and church tyranny. Church judicatories have been dealing craftily with them.<sup>3</sup> Some will think, though, that we reckon them all faithful that are on our side in the present secession. Indeed, I am far from thinking that all of that name will be found faithful.<sup>4</sup>

Many a heavy charge will God have against many in this generation. To some He will say, You sided with the corruptions

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1. Vol. VII, p. 447. Referring, no doubt, to the Act appointed to be read following the Porteous Riot. 2. Vol. VII, pp. 441, 449, 450. 3. Vol. VIII, p. 56. 4. Vol. VIII, p. 205.

of the times. To others, You persecuted my servants and thrust them out from their kirks and houses and livelihoods, and thought you did God a service.<sup>1</sup> Many think a little worldly convenience, a well-paid stipend, or an estate, better than the prospect of a crown of life.<sup>2</sup>

When Erskine was forced to stop preaching in the parish church, he warned: God has a witness against all and every elder in Dunfermline who has ceased to fill his office and turned his back on the cause that he solemnly engaged in; and a witness against every intruder in the parish or presbytery of Dunfermline; against every man and woman in Dunfermline who has no regard to the Testimony and Warnings I have particularly given at several times and read before them that no one may pretend ignorance. Whom is God adducing witness? Not only the poor man that has been left so long in the ministry here, but all his brethren associated with him. It was necessary that the gospel should be preached to you in Dunfermline and preached by us to you these thirty and two years, and now that the ministry, at last, should be accompanied with a testimony for all the truths that are deserted by this generation. It was necessary that it should be done, and if you reckon yourselves unworthy of it, know it, that lo! we turn to another congregation, and turn, as it were, from the old congregation to a witnessing congregation there, that shall witness for God against all the perfidious and

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1. Vol. VIII, p. 208.

2. Vol. VIII, p. 216.

treacherous persons in Dunfermline that have disregarded all the warnings of God.<sup>1</sup>

About this time there began the Cambuslang Revival, which was eventually led by George Whitefield. Erskine has no kind words to speak either for the revival or for Whitefield.

We hear of many conversions now-a-days, he says, and would to God they were all true and not delusive.<sup>2</sup> We hear of a strange work spreading far and near, and it is called a work of God, but instead there are so many conversions, so many delusions of Satan taking place, and may all the Lord's people be delivered from any such conversions.<sup>3</sup> Never did Satan appear so delusive as in this work. Instead of convictions we hear of convulsions, bitter outcryings, frights, faintings, and foamings. How delusive is this work! Instead of conversions we hear of sudden consolations by voices, visions, revelations, impulses, and impressions. What a delusive work is this!<sup>4</sup> According to "the view I have of that matter, I shall shew you in eight or ten particulars, what another God, what another Christ is appearing in the delusive spirit of this time (brought in by the instrumentality of the foreigner, of whom we had once some grounds for very favourable thoughts and expectations, till we understood him more fully, and found him in several respects, a stranger to our God, and setting up another God)."<sup>5</sup> The ten arguments, in summary, are as follows:

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1. Vol. VIII, pp. 292, 293.

2. Vol. VIII, p. 127.

3. Vol. VIII, p. 153.

4. Vol. VIII, pp. 172, 173.

5. Vol. VIII, p. 174.

(1) For the defense of our reformation we now own our secession from such as are razing it. But this delusive spirit is calling us off from this reformation-work and all contending and witnessing for it. (2) The new god robs Christ of His government in the visible church and seeks to destroy the ancient order and discipline thereof. (3) He makes the sin of those pulling down the government and discipline of God's church a small matter. (4) He cries up boundless toleration of all sects and a liberty of conscience and communion with all sorts of heretics, especially if they have but the denomination of Christian. (5) It seeks to have the most solemn covenants broken and thinks nothing of involving the land in national perjury. (6) The new god leads to the great aversion and opposition to the testimony of the time. For a vile reproach is cast upon us as if we would allow none to be true converts but those that follow us; nor nothing to be the work of God but what is wrought among us; nor none to be true Christians but such as join in with (what they call) our Testimony. (7) The new god leads people to favor and own those ministers who are evidently erroneous, as much, if not more, than even those that are contending for the faith. (8) The new Christ is with such a noise that all supposed convictions and conversions are instantly noised abroad, as if some outward motion were among the true marks of inward conviction. (9) He appears driving poor people out of their wits and senses, beating down their bodies with pains and convulsions, distempers and distractions, and then sounding into their ear some sudden comfort. (10) He stirs up private persons, yea, even some young boys, to preach, exhort, and expound Scripture publicly, and so to prostitute the sacred office of the ministry; and so far as the devil gets leave, would make void and unnecessary that regular call and ministerial mission that God has appointed in His word.<sup>1</sup>

These are sufficient arguments to show that the delusive spirit that is now abroad is leading the people to another God. It cannot be the voice of the Son of God that casts bodies down into dead fits and dead-like distortions and disorders.<sup>2</sup> How many are now disclaiming all confessions and standards of doctrine besides Scripture as human compositions. They are for no

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1. Vol. VIII, pp. 174-178. This is not a quotation.

2. Vol. VIII, p. 358.



covenants, no standards, but the Bible.<sup>1</sup> But will it ever justify the apostates of our day that they say they cleave to the things of greatest concern to salvation, while they know that the contempt of God's authority in the smallest thing is damnable?<sup>2</sup> What blasphemy against the Holy Ghost to ascribe to Him that work whereby so many are converted to perjury and covenant-breaking with the great God!<sup>3</sup> Devils are raging and delusions abounding. May God deliver His people from such Satanical delusions too much supported in our day!<sup>4</sup>

There next came the division over the Burgher Oath, and this is the last ecclesiastical event with which Erskine concerns himself in his sermons, for, of course, his death occurred in 1752. Here again one notices a progressively more severe attitude towards the Anti-Burgher brethren.

In July 1747, he says, "As to the dear Brethren, who are left to arrogate such unlawful power to themselves, the worst thing I shall say of them, is, in the Spirit of meekness, what Christ said once to his disciples, 'They know not what Spirit they are of.'"<sup>5</sup>

By April of the following year his attitude had changed. The temple of God in this world, he says, stands in the midst of destroyers on the left and on the right, and so does the temple of the associate church in Scotland at this day. She is called to stand in the middle between two extremes: the back-

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1. Vol. VIII, p. 206.  
 3. Vol. VIII, p. 239.  
 5. Vol. IX, p. 22.

2. Vol. VIII, p. 257.  
 4. Vol. VIII, pp. 335, 346.

sliding judicatories on the one hand, who are going on in their course of defection, and on the other hand the schismatical course of a number of brethren.<sup>1</sup> None can think that these who were for dividing the true Associate body are the true Associate Synod. This division has been effectuated by the introduction of dividing questions about matters that were never our proper business; and particularly about a religious clause of some bur-gess oaths, wherein men promise to maintain the true religion authorized by the laws of the land and to renounce popery, which was never our business to quarrel. So some err, not knowing the limits set by Scripture between Christ's kingdom in His church whereby His ministers are properly the ministers of Christ, and the kingdom of God in the world wherein magistrates are the ministers of God.<sup>2</sup>

The brethren not only condemn the religious but the civil part of the burgess oath as well. Their new constitution calls the constitution of the church of Scotland Erastian in all her reformation periods. They have assumed to themselves the sole power of the keys. They have renounced the true religion and have denounced us as approvers of contradictory oaths and have turned their new opinions into articles of faith and communion, libelling all others. They are making their own opinions to be also those of God.<sup>3</sup> Yet all of us, ministers and people, are responsible for the breach, and none of us can justify himself

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1. Vol. IX, p. 121.

2. Vol. IX, pp. 122-136.

3. Ibid.

before God.<sup>1</sup>

How reprovable are they who pretend a zeal for Zion's King and yet abuse His authority and prostitute His royal prerogatives by their pretended censures and excommunications, passed without any power but what is sinfully arrogated and assumed, without any cause or ground but what is imaginary or fictitious, as has been documented to the world.<sup>2</sup> This work of separatists is not of God's approbation, or agreeable to His word, because it deviates from the good old way, it is carried on with lies, calumny, and reproach, it covers violence with a mask of zeal. It bears the mark of madness, it fosters pride and arrogance and lordly pre-eminence, it makes men unnatural and unsociable.<sup>3</sup> These separatists are strangely occupied in raising up ungrounded censures and pretended excommunications, open and shameless prohibitions, discharging people to hear and join these from whom they have so sinfully disjoined themselves.<sup>4</sup> Surely they exclude themselves from our communion tables.<sup>5</sup> And surely we must witness against them.<sup>6</sup>

Erskine's criticisms were primarily directed at the sins and ecclesiastical events of his day, but he occasionally commented on other things that happened. For instance, famine and disease (i.e. small-pox) were mentioned as visible evidences of God's judgment upon the local people.<sup>7</sup> During the severe drought of 1723, he says, If God call down famine upon the land

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1. *Ibid.* 2. Vol. IX, p. 344. 3. *Ibid.* 4. Vol. IX, pp. 389, 390. 5. Vol. IX, p. 449. 6. Vol. IX, p. 477. 7. Vol. VI, p. 315.

and make you feel the effects of this terrible drought, it is truly a judgment upon you. What are you learning out of this great drought? Maybe God is saying, I will send trouble after trouble upon you till you be so humbled as to be thankful for the least mercy, till you be thankful that you were not born in America where men are worshipping the devil.<sup>1</sup>

Wars and threatened invasions were always judgments of God upon an apostate land. In 1739, he remarked, God is arming popish powers against us and appearing in fury. The Lord is about to punish the people of Britain and Ireland for their iniquity--breaking the Solemn League and Covenant, bloodshed, unbelief, contempt of the means of grace, apostasy, and defection. National sins are to be punished by national desolation. The slaughter weapons are ready even though France and Spain were not as ready as they seem to be.<sup>2</sup> Though Scotland and England had walls reaching to the heavens and navies covering the ocean, and though France and Spain were both sleeping, yet God has a controversy which He will plead. We know not how soon the life of thousands may be a prey to the devouring sword.<sup>3</sup>

Following the rebellion of 1745, he comments, "God hath delivered us from the dreadful disturbance that was in this country, by a wicked insurrection, since the last year."<sup>4</sup> Also, "Glory to God that this late popish insurrection, as well as a former one in our day, is quelled, that sought the introduction

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1. Vol. II, pp. 106-108.      2. Vol. VII, pp. 373, 374, 390;  
Vol. VI, p. 180.      3. Vol. VII, pp. 453, 454; Vol. VIII,  
p. 393.      4. Vol. VIII, p. 448.

of such antichristian abominations."<sup>1</sup>

Besides these many references and applications to his day, there are five other matters on which he gives his opinion.

The first of these is missions. There are not too many references to missions, and yet there are sufficient to indicate his missionary spirit.

He states, Christ ordered His ambassadors to go and proclaim Him to the world, even to teach all nations and preach the gospel of His kingdom to every creature.<sup>2</sup> We should pray for a blessing upon the design of preaching the gospel to a Pagan and Heathen world. We wish that you would mind them that are called to preach the gospel to the Heathens. O pray that the Lord may be with them!<sup>3</sup> Remember God's ancient people the Jews, the blinded nations, the poor negroes, and all the instruments that God is employing to bring the gospel light among them.<sup>4</sup> We need to pray especially that the time of the Jews' rejection may be of no longer continuance.<sup>5</sup> We have every encouragement to pray for the conversion of the Jews. If there were a spirit of Christ among us in their behalf, we might think the happy day was hastening on when it is promised that the Gentiles shall hasten the gathering of the Jews.<sup>6</sup> Oh! pray, pray, for that ancient people of God. The day of their conversion will be a greater gathering to Christ among the Gentiles than that we have yet seen, and it would fare better with us if we were more engaged in pray-

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1. Vol. VIII, p. 475.

2. Vol. V, p. 191; Vol. III, p. 301.

3. Vol. VI, p. 399.

4. Vol. VIII, p. 32.

5. Vol. III,

p. 293.

6. Vol. III, p. 410; Vol. I, pp. 96, 97, 159.

ing for them.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, there are certain suggestions regarding Christian conduct. By forsaking the world we are not to go out of it, not to forsake personal society, nor vow a voluntary poverty, nor to be idle and improvident, but rather to use the world as stewards that are to give an account.<sup>2</sup> We should not abuse our bodies by immoderate fasting, penance, or unmercifully macerating the flesh.<sup>3</sup>

Riches in themselves are no hindrance to Christ.<sup>4</sup> We have the duty of charity to the poor and honoring the Lord with our substance and frugality and industry about our worldly concerns. It is a good sign when the heart is warmed towards one that is a child of grace, though a beggar or in poor circumstances or one of little wit.<sup>5</sup> But let men be content with their low estate if God has put them into it. Let not poor people quarrel at their lot, for Christ was a poor man.<sup>6</sup>

It is not unlawful, but necessary on many accounts, both to eat and drink with moderation and to trade and traffic with honesty. Yet I hope none thence infer that it is lawful either to make unnecessary society with the wicked or drunkenness a part of their trade.<sup>7</sup> We must not choose the wicked for our daily companions, delight in their discourse, or frequent their haunts. We are not to squander time with idle company, idle visits, or idle diversions.<sup>8</sup>

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1. Vol. III, p. 424.      2. Vol. I, pp. 289, 455.      3. Vol. II, p. 193.      4. Vol. IX, p. 314.      5. Vol. II, pp. 191, 192; Vol. VI, pp. 393, 394.      6. Vol. VIII, p. 86; Vol. I, p. 10.      7. Vol. I, p. 476.      8. Vol. I, p. 467; Vol. III, pp. 71, 276.

A third thing is the relationship of church and state. Magistrates are ordained of God and armed with the power of the sword for the punishment of malefactors.<sup>1</sup> Does it not therefore concern magistrates to give glory to Him by enacting good laws and executing them faithfully? They should solemnly execute judgment and justice, yea, they should solemnly reform themselves and study the reformation of the land and the places of their concern.<sup>2</sup> Secular power and spiritual power in a Christian land ought not to be blinded or confounded together, but they should be subservient one to the other.<sup>3</sup> The civil and ecclesiastical laws stand upon separate foundations, and when the laws of men do clash with the privileges and immunities of the church, it is a manifest encroachment upon and contempt of the royal prerogative of God.<sup>4</sup> Ministers have not any civil power committed to them. "It is not a compelling of men's consciences, far less a compelling men against their consciences, in matters of religion: as for example, in the business of the sacramental test, you shall be fined, imprisoned, ruined in your estate, if you take not the Lord's Supper."<sup>5</sup>

Fourthly, there was his interest in young people. Let no children hearing me, he says, think they are too young to be included in this call to come to Christ. Nay, the gospel is preached to you as well as to old folk. You may die in your youth, and if you die without Christ, you will perish as well as

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1. Vol. I, p. 20.      2. Vol. VII, p. 127.      3. Vol. VI, p. 28.  
 4. Vol. VII, p. 282.      5. Vol. VII, p. 428.

old Christless people.<sup>1</sup> Ye that are children, would it not be your great happiness to be the sons and daughters of God? Your father and mother may die and leave you. Therefore, it is to your best interest to seek Him to be your everlasting Father.<sup>2</sup> Alas! my dear children, you may see what ill hearts you have, that make you think more of little plays and trifles, nignays and butterflies, than you think of Christ. You mind anything sooner than your Creator or Redeemer. Therefore, after this when you are playing, will you think more of praying.<sup>3</sup> Let the story of Elisha teach you to beware of being mockers of the godly.<sup>4</sup>

Lastly, there was his attitude towards the ministry of his day. It is no disgrace, he says, to any man or any man's children to be preachers.<sup>5</sup> What are the qualifications for a minister? That he be a good Christian himself, that he is able to convince and teach, that he be able to teach what he himself knows. There is the outward call of the church, including both the judgment of the eldership and presbytery and the election of the congregation, when the minister is to be fixed to any particular charge. There is the inward call of the Spirit, lying in the Lord's qualifying a man with gifts and graces for that work.<sup>6</sup> Though the ministerial office is a seat in the house of Christ superior to that of the people, yet there is no superiority in one pastor over another. And whatever pre-eminence the

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1. Vol. III, p. 215.

2. Vol. IV, p. 46.

3. Vol. IV,

p. 49. 4. Vol. I, p. 243.

5. Vol. I, p. 266.

6. Vol. VII, pp. 425, 426.


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minister has, it is of administration and pastoral instruction.<sup>1</sup>

Ministers must go out quickly, for sinners are in hazard of perishing eternally, and we must hasten to pull them as brands out of the burning.<sup>2</sup> Many, however, show their ignorance of God's method of converting sinners and sanctifying them, by magnifying the maxims of morality and supposing that the mere preaching of moral duty was enough to make men holy.<sup>3</sup> There was never less morality among people of all ranks than since so many laid aside the preaching of the gospel and made the inculcating of moral duties their principal theme. And many who extol moral virtues are themselves the most immoral persons.<sup>4</sup> Instead of the simplicity of the gospel and the plain preaching of the word of God, preference is given to the wisdom of words and human literature. On the one hand, candidates for the ministry and some actually ministers, though tinctured with loose and legal principles, set up a new and modish way of preaching with flourishing harangues, without studying to preach Christ and the great substantial truths of the gospel, but rather empty speculations and lifeless morality. On the other, people that come under the name of wits, people of fine taste, are pleased with no sermons but such as are artificially decked with the flowers of gaudy rhetoric and tickling oratory.<sup>5</sup> Some tell us that it is the great and learned men of the world that know preaching best, but all the flowers of rhetoric and oratory in the world and all the

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1. Vol. VII, p. 440.      2. Vol. VII, p. 451.      3. Vol. II, p. 235.      4. Vol. I, p. 429.      5. Vol. II, pp. 249, 250; Vol. IV, p. 216; Vol. VI, p. 22.      

seemingly respectful expressions towards God, without the preaching of Christ, only cast a cloud upon His glory.<sup>1</sup>

### JOHN ERSKINE

For John Erskine the great business of the minister was "to instruct guilty creatures how they may be recovered from the ruins of their apostasy, serve God acceptably here, and enjoy him for ever hereafter."<sup>2</sup> It was "to make known to perishing sinners the sublime, the affecting, the comfortable truths" of the Scriptures.<sup>3</sup> Many, he says, are of the opinion that there is no need to preach Christ except to infidels; that the bulk of professed Christians know what is sufficient of the mysteries of religion, and that therefore morality is the only proper subject of sermons to them.<sup>4</sup> But, Christ crucified and salvation through Him; the law, as a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ; and exhorting the disciples of Jesus to adorn His doctrine by the conscientious performance of every duty, these ought to be the chief subjects of our sermons.<sup>5</sup>

"Should the pulpit," he asks, "canvass the propriety of political measures, about which the wise and good think differently?--No."<sup>6</sup> Where ministers innocently may, they should accommodate themselves to the people's humors. But they "should avoid imprudently intermeddling in controversies of a civil nature, especially among those of their own charge...."<sup>7</sup>

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1. Vol. I, p. 216; Vol. IV, p. 216.

3. Vol. I, p. 56.

6. Vol. II, p. 419.

2. Vol. I, p. 53.

4. Vol. I, p. 409.

7. Vol. I, p. 32.

5. Vol. I, p. 119.

Thus John Erskine draws a line as to the point at which the minister may properly intervene in current affairs, at least, in the pulpit. But, like Ralph Erskine, he is not backwards in pointing out the sin or error of a situation, though he refrains almost entirely from comment upon specific events or circumstances. His remarks are usually of a more general nature.

Like Ralph, he criticizes the low state of religion and the prevalence of sin, but he nowhere comments that sin is more prevalent than ever before. Iniquity abounds, he says, the love of many waxes cold, the peculiar doctrines of Christianity are run down and opposed, and a tender and circumspect behavior ridiculed by men who value themselves standards of genius and politeness.<sup>1</sup> It is an adulterous and perverse generation,<sup>2</sup> a generation ignorant of Christ.<sup>3</sup> There is contempt of God's Sabbaths and disregard of ministerial instruction.<sup>4</sup> Orthodoxy is everywhere spoken against.<sup>5</sup> Many are wishing to do away with an educated ministry.<sup>6</sup> The Sabbath is employed by many in gadding about in the fields in parties of pleasure or in transacting worldly business or in paying and receiving unprofitable visits.<sup>7</sup>

One person invites a youth to the gaming table, another to the theaters, another to the tavern, to benumb, if possible, and stupefy his conscience.<sup>8</sup> In quest of happiness one sex flies from home to the tavern, and both sexes fly to the ball, the card-table, or the theater.<sup>9</sup> Among the sons of the great there

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1. Vol. I, p. 78; Vol. II, p. 318.

2. Vol. I, p. 399.

3. Vol. I, p. 414.

4. Vol. I, p. 141.

5. Vol. I, p. 19.

6. Vol. I, p. 24.

7. Vol. I, p. 141.

8. Vol. II, p. 123.

9. Vol. II, p. 435.

are temptations to indolence, effeminacy, luxury, pomp, and vanity. The time of the daughters of the great is ordinarily filled with receiving and returning visits, attending plays, assemblies, and card-tables, and reading a succession of romances.<sup>1</sup>

Is there not cause to lament that religion is so much decayed among us? How formal, superficial, and luke-warm the religion of many!<sup>2</sup> Multitudes "are regular in the outward forms of religion, from a principle of complaisance; which would make them good Catholics at Rome, and good Mussulmen at Constantino-ple."<sup>3</sup> Many oppose the faith by thin-spun metaphysical sophistry, by rhetorical declamations, by sly hints and innuendoes, or by insolent and ill-placed raillery from the press and stage. In taverns, coffee-houses, and almost every place of public resort, ministers of Satan are at work.<sup>4</sup> Many writers would obtrude upon us a rational Christianity in which the basic doctrines of our faith are represented as doctrines which, though pardonable in our weak and well-meaning forefathers, suit not this liberal-minded and penetrating age. The high reputation which some of these writers have acquired as philosophers and politicians has blinded many to adopt their theology.<sup>5</sup> Our modern sceptics even pronounce the religious principle as malignant and hurtful.<sup>6</sup>

If God brought great doom upon Judea for despising His law,

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1. Vol. II, pp. 62, 63.

2. Vol. II, pp. 91, 447.

3. Vol. I, p. 172.

4. Vol. I, p. 150.

5. Vol. I,

p. 226.

6. Vol. II, p. 345.

what may not Britain dread?<sup>1</sup> Judgments have already come and are threatening. Are there not disputes between rulers and subjects, between North and South Britons, fierce contentions between Britain and her colonies, and between one colony and another? But greater judgments are threatened. We are assured by the highest authority that we are in danger of war and pestilence. Yet we are little impressed. At such a time, places of amusement are crowded, especially those entertainments of the theater, the unlawfulness of which at any time has been argued by respectable writers of both our own and the Episcopal communion. I speak not of attacks on the characters of faithful ministers, but sacred things are jeered and derided on the stage with a heaven-daring profanity which, one would think, would shock every good Christian. Yet many of both Presbyterian and Episcopal denominations have given their sanction by their presence.<sup>2</sup>

With regard to the church of Scotland and the conduct of her courts, he has more criticism. He condemns the conduct of the church judicatories because they vary from professed principles, prostitute consciences either to the humors of the great or the prejudices of the populace, behave with insolence to superiors in age and experience, listen only to one side of a question and deny a full and fair hearing to the other, silence sober reasoning by subtle means, treat one another with harshness

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1. Vol. I, pp. 159, 160.

2. Vol. II, pp. 203-205. This statement was made a few years before the war with the American colonies.

and severity for different sentiments and different conduct in matters of doubtful disputation.<sup>1</sup>

Detestable is their bigotry and party spirit, though, alas, not uncommon, either among those distinguished for zeal, or those who wish to be thought moderate men, which destroys the feelings of humanity, steels the heart against the dictates of justice, and is too blind to discern, or too dishonest to acknowledge, the excellencies of those, whose sentiments and conduct, especially in matters which appear to them important, happen to be opposite to theirs.<sup>2</sup>

Some abundantly zealous for uncertain and intricate speculations, for little distinctions of their party and for uninstituted rites and ceremonies, have little zeal for those fundamental articles of faith and for that holiness of heart and life in which all true Christians agree.<sup>3</sup> A flood of irreligion has so quenched in us the sacred flame that only languishing sparks remain.<sup>4</sup>

Erskine warns against certain dangers and weaknesses. For instance, he says, "It is just cause of offence, and, did vital piety flourish, would be offensive to our people, that the Lord's Supper is so seldom dispensed."<sup>5</sup> There are also other things. In our ordinations, he states, we must guard against giving to one in the name of Jesus the charge of a congregation unwilling to submit to him and among whom there is no probability of his usefulness.<sup>6</sup> Patrons should be careful in presenting one to benefice. The worst grievance in presentation is that many patrons are indifferent as regards the person with whom they

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1. Vol. I, p. 63.  
pp. 91, 92.  
6. Vol. I, p. 65.

2. Vol. I, p. 261.  
4. Vol. II, p. 93.

3. Vol. II,  
5. Vol. I, p. 62.

entrust the souls of the people.<sup>1</sup> If many professed Christians spent less time in censuring ministers and more in praying for them, the ministry in this land would be less blamed than it is and probably less blameworthy.<sup>2</sup>

When some with zeal oppose the Scripture doctrine of the Trinity, of the atonement of Christ, justification through His merits, and the renewing and sanctifying influence of the Spirit, we who believe the truth and importance of these doctrines should defend them with equal zeal.<sup>3</sup> We should also oppose those who indulge a luxuriant fancy from ideas of God and divine things, which neither reason nor Scripture warrant, and by these are raised to rapturous emotions, for they entertain themselves with mere shadows and first form and then worship an idol.<sup>4</sup> Divisions among Christians are an occasion of the contempt of religion.<sup>5</sup>

Erskine bewails the lukewarmness of the day. In our age and Christian country, he says, to speak seriously of Christianity is by many deemed a proof that too much piety has made men mad. The name Methodist is the mildest reproach cast upon such, as if fervent devotion and a conscientious regard to duty were monopolized by those who adopt the peculiar opinions and practices of that sect.<sup>6</sup> All zealous and fervent expressions of love to God are censured as hypocritical, or despised as enthusiastic, or attributed to such mechanical causes as the free

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1. Vol. I, p. 38.

2. Vol. I, pp. 72, 73, 182.

3. Vol. I, p. 104.

4. Vol. II, p. 186.

5. Vol. II,

p. 208.

6. Vol. I, p. 206.

circulation of the blood or the brisk agitation of the animal spirits.<sup>1</sup> Zeal has become a term of reproach. It is esteemed one mark of the liberality of sentiment and improvement of the present age that they despise and ridicule this quality in their forefathers.<sup>2</sup>

He presents his ideas regarding the proper work and responsibilities of the minister. The qualifications necessary for one entering the ministry are: personal religion, soundness in the faith, a good genius improved by a competent measure of true learning, prudence and discretion, and a due mixture of a studious disposition and an active spirit.<sup>3</sup> True ministers engage in their work not seeking their own profit but the welfare of the people.<sup>4</sup> The whole of a minister's time is too little to spend in trying to save even one soul. He knows the worth of time too well to waste it in vain amusements, idle visits, unprofitable studies, or immersing himself needlessly in secular business or political schemes or anything else foreign to his office. He counts those hours lost in which he is not either getting good to his own soul, doing good to others, or acquiring greater fitness for his important trust.<sup>5</sup> The soul of the meanest is precious in his sight. He enters the cottage of the poor as willingly as the palace of the wealthy and can esteem holiness though dressed in rags or lying on a dunghill. Nor is he biased by the hopes of favor so that he cringes or

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1. Vol. II, p. 184.  
p. 2.

2. Vol. II, p. 91.  
4. Vol. I, p. 4.

3. Vol. I,  
5. Vol. I, p. 6.



fawns to the great.<sup>1</sup> He would rather be right in his opinions than be thought so. He will not sacrifice the truth for the reputation of holding it, though philosophers call him enthusiast, the populace salute him heretic, or statesmen pronounce him mad.<sup>2</sup>

He will be able to read the Scriptures in the original languages and have some acquaintance with natural and moral philosophy, history, antiquity, the best Greek and Roman authors, the arts of logic, rhetoric, and criticism, for without this ability and knowledge a minister can scarcely fail to be despised in an age of so much learning as the present.<sup>3</sup> Ministers are not set apart to their office to trifle away six days of the week and then go to the pulpit with whatever comes uppermost.<sup>4</sup> They should preach so that the most ignorant will understand.<sup>5</sup> The subjects of their sermons will be important, suited to the occasions on which they preach, and calculated, according to the opinions, characters, and situations of their hearers, to remove their prejudices, correct their errors and rectify what is wrong in their temper and conduct.<sup>6</sup>

The minister will be active in public duties which help many, rather than in private duties which help a few families, for a formal visit once a year, with a short prayer and a few general advices, is a bodily exercise which profits little.<sup>7</sup>

John Erskine was very 'mission' minded, and he was an ac-

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1. Vol. I, p. 8.      2. Vol. I, pp. 9, 106, 206.      3. Vol. I, p. 24.      4. Vol. I, p. 36.      5. Vol. I, p. 57.  
6. Vol. I, p. 109.      7. Vol. I, pp. 124, 125.

tive supporter of both home and foreign missions. A concern, he says, for the interests of religion in foreign parts has been sneered at by our new British historian<sup>1</sup> as a low and odious bigotry, not to be justified by any maxim of sound politics. However, among the Indians of North America it is all to our political advantage to bind them to British interests by uniting them with us in religious sentiment. But besides this purely civil interest, can we behold multitudes of souls in imminent danger of eternal destruction and not listen to the cry of their necessity? Shall Jesuits compass land and sea, spare neither money nor labor, to proselyte men to idolatry and superstition, and shall the zeal, the activity, the liberality of those who profess the pure gospel of Christ fall short of theirs?<sup>2</sup> To propagate religion to places wholly destitute of gospel light is indeed a difficult undertaking. Yet even for this sufficient funds might be raised if every private Christian would contribute as God has prospered him.<sup>3</sup>

While some may contribute their money, labor, or sufferings for sending the gospel to the dark places of the world, still others may do the same things in our own land for the multitudes ready to perish for lack of knowledge.<sup>4</sup> To promote genuine Christianity and loyalty and industry in those remote regions of Scotland where multitudes are prepared by false religion, ignorance, or idleness to disturb the public peace is

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1. David Hume. 2. Vol. II, pp. 355-358. 3. Vol. II,  
p. 353. 4. Vol. II, p. 59.

the first and chief care of the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

Erskine's opinions on the relationship of church and state are mentioned in only one sermon, when he says, "The state must no doubt determine what shall be the established religion, and who shall be entitled to the legal benefice for teaching it; but no government ought, and our government does not attempt, to impose upon any, either a religion, or an instructor in religion."<sup>2</sup>

For him, as well as for Ralph Erskine, rulers, in the just and constitutional exercise of their powers, are ministers of God for good, and their services are in kind, degree, and continuance, just what God sees meet.<sup>3</sup> Communities which neglect to promote religion neglect the best means of their own safety and interest.<sup>4</sup>

Many of his sermons mention the democratic and revolutionary opinions that were sweeping France, together with their effect both upon that country and Britain.

In a neighboring country, he comments, a destructive despotism for more than a century has at last produced the miseries of anarchy, and a corrupt absurd religion has betrayed many into scepticism and infidelity and some into downright atheism.<sup>5</sup> When political opinions spread, seducing subjects to undermine, under pretence of improving, an excellent constitution and to

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1. Vol. II, pp. 353, 354.      2. Vol. I, p. 66.      3. Vol. II, pp. 376, 398.      4. Vol. II, p. 446.      5. Vol. I, p. 104.

rebel against their rightful sovereign because they see not the wisdom of certain measures of government, we ought to show the falsity of such opinions.<sup>1</sup> In 1792, Erskine commented, "Has not the seditious spirit, which appeared in some places three months ago, well nigh subsided, so that none feel, and few dread, the evils of anarchy?...Yet, are not these evils severely felt in a neighbouring state?"<sup>2</sup>

Presumptuous, self-willed men despise government and are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. The insolent treatment of our sovereign in some publications can hardly be accounted for on other principles.<sup>3</sup> If ever a season demanded fervent prayer for our rulers and commanders, surely the present demands it, when we are in danger of being deprived of the inestimable blessings we have enjoyed under the illustrious house of Hanover.<sup>4</sup> Let us give thanks for the peace and happiness which these lands have enjoyed since the Revolution.<sup>5</sup> And compare what our situation now is with what it probably would be if our enemies prevailed. If they prevail, there will be constant alarms for yourselves, your friends, and your families; slavery; the holding of fortune and life at the pleasure of a haughty conqueror; the Mass-book, idolatry, superstition, Jesuits and Dominicans, whose compassion to souls has often appeared in treasons and assassinations, persecutions and massacres, and all the horrors of the inquisition; we would be required to worship

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1. Vol. I, p. 103.      2. Vol. II, p. 411.      3. Vol. II, p. 399.  
 4. Vol. II, p. 402. This was spoken in 1779, at the time of the war with Spain and France.  
 5. Vol. II, p. 407.

consecrated wafers, saints, angels, pictures, images, and bones.<sup>1</sup>

A religion once prevailed in these lands, retaining the name of Christian, but at enmity with the most important doctrines and laws of Christ and breathing a spirit the reverse of His.<sup>2</sup> At the Reformation, at the sound of the gospel trumpet, the walls of the Popish Jericho received a shock from which, we pray God, they may never recover.<sup>3</sup> In this day, though, some who are sincere Protestants and warmly attached to civil liberty have unwarily damped the zeal of others by asserting that the spirit of Popery is now become gentle and tolerant and that it is not the spirit of the times to persecute for religion. Others even wish for the establishment of arbitrary powers, in hopes that this would soon pave the way for the return to Popery.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, Erskine gives his attitude towards the social conditions of the day. It was the will of the Lord, he says, that the poor should never cease out of the land.<sup>5</sup> The distinction of rich and poor naturally arises from the right of property. Had men remained in a state of innocence that right would have been unnecessary, for everyone would have labored according to his strength and cheerfully supplied the necessities of those who could not labor. But a community of goods in man's depraved state is neither fit nor possible. It would encourage the indolent and dissipated to do nothing, and yet

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1. Vol. II, pp. 405, 406.      2. Vol. I, p. 179.      3. Vol. I, p. 486.      4. Vol. II, p. 403.      5. Vol. II, p. 1.

secure themselves the comforts of life, by depriving the sober and industrious of the fruit of their labors.<sup>1</sup> It was therefore the will of God that everyone should have an exclusive right to what he acquired by his honest labor, a right to possess and enjoy it himself, or to bestow or bequeath it to others as he pleased. Thus, property being secured by just and equitable laws, the rich, employing the poor, are freed from much fatigue and acquire many enjoyments, and the services of the poor are repaid by what maintains themselves and their families.<sup>2</sup> Salvation is offered to the poor as well as the rich. Though they may not have leisure to attend week-day sermons, though they cannot contribute for the support of a minister or even purchase a seat in a church, yet provision is made that their poverty shall not debar them from enjoying the gospel in this place.<sup>3</sup>

Christianity promotes diligence, frugality, and the faithful discharge of every trust, and thus it contributes to success in the different offices and employments of life.<sup>4</sup> The toils to which our ordinary business subjects us, when endured from the love and fear of God, become truly and substantially acts of religion.<sup>5</sup>

#### HUGH BLAIR

Blair suggests the content, and therein the purpose, of his

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1. Ibid. 2. Vol. II, p. 2. 3. Vol. I, p. 166. New Greyfriars' Church. 4. Vol. II, pp. 9, 112. 5. Vol. II, p. 305.

preaching when he states that the religion he preaches

consists in the love of God and the love of man, grounded on faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Redeemer of the world, the Intercessor for the penitent, and the patron of the virtuous; through whom we enjoy comfortable access to the Sovereign of the universe in the acts of worship and devotion. It consists in justice, humanity, and mercy; in a fair and candid mind, a generous and affectionate heart; accompanied with temperance, self-government, and a perpetual regard in all our actions to conscience and to the law of God.<sup>1</sup>

Nowhere does he mention the relationship of preaching to the current events or political and ecclesiastical questions of the times, but from the small space he gives to such matters it is evident that for him the primary purpose of preaching was to instill Christian character. Like John Erskine, he often gives a general opinion upon certain questions, though he rarely speaks on specific issues.

He was not a pessimist of the Ralph Erskine type. It has always been common, he says, for persons to represent the age in which they live as the worst that ever appeared. But true religion gives no sanction to such severe censures or such gloomy views.<sup>2</sup> Different modes of iniquity may distinguish different ages of the world, while the sum of corruption is nearly always the same.<sup>3</sup> Blair even has something good to say about the times, for he states, "In modern times, the chief improvement of which we have to boast is a sense of humanity. This, notwithstanding the selfishness that still prevails, is the favourite and distinguishing virtue of the age."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Vol. III, p. 4.      2. Vol. IV, pp. 78, 105.      3. Vol. IV, p. 79; Vol. I, p. 319.      4. Vol. III, pp. 33, 34; Vol. IV, p. 434.

But Blair does criticize the sins and errors of the day. Total indifference to religious principles appears to gain ground, he says.<sup>1</sup> It is an age of dissipation and luxury.<sup>2</sup> There is a lack of reverence for the Supreme Being which causes that profanation of the name of God which we so often hear from unhallowed lips.<sup>3</sup> There is a freedom of behavior, an air of forwardness, a tone of dissipation, an easy negligence, which is appearing fashionable in high life.<sup>4</sup> In this country where wealth and abundance are so much diffused over all stations, and where it is well known that inferior orders of men are perpetually pressing upon those who are above them and following them in their manners, a life of dissipation is perhaps not less frequent among the middle than among the higher classes of society.<sup>5</sup>

One of the reproaches of modern times is the passion for gaming, which is so often the refuge of the idle sons of pleasure and often the last resource of the ruined.<sup>6</sup> As soon as a man begins to seek his happiness from the gaming-table, the midnight revel, and the other haunts of licentiousness, you may with certainty prognosticate the ruin of that man to be just at hand.<sup>7</sup> Another reproach of the day is that a ridiculous idea of honor should stain the annals of modern life with so many tragic scenes of horror as are seen in dueling.<sup>8</sup> Whenever all regard to the Lord's Day becomes abolished, when on it we are

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1. Vol. II, p. 401.      2. Vol. V, p. 69.      3. Vol. V, p. 33.  
 4. Vol. III, p. 104.      5. Vol. V, p. 267.      6. Vol. V,  
 p. 258.      7. Vol. II, pp. 16, 17.      8. Vol. V, p. 326.



allowed to mingle without any distinction in our common affairs and even in our ordinary diversions and amusements, we may account this a certain symptom of declining virtue and of approaching general immorality.<sup>1</sup>

We have seen a striking example in our age of the terrors which the day of the Lord shall produce, by the partial ruins of the world, which the visitation of God has brought on countries well-known.<sup>2</sup> But it is hardly to be expected that the idea of the end of the world will have much influence on the present age.<sup>3</sup>

He comments on the religious life in the church. Now in the fifty-fourth year of my ministry, he states, I can declare with confidence as my opinion that there exists not anywhere a more respectable and useful class of men than the clergy of the church of Scotland. There was a time when the Presbyterian clergy lay under the imputation of being sour in their tempers, narrow in their opinions, and intolerant in their principles. But a more liberal spirit has pervaded the clerical order in this part of Britain. Their manners are more conciliatory, they study to promote harmony and good order in their parishes and have shown themselves addicted to useful literature.<sup>4</sup>

It is much to be lamented that among all denominations of Christians the uncharitable spirit has prevailed of unwarrantably circumscribing the terms of divine grace within a narrow

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1. Vol. V, p. 199.  
an earthquake.  
424, 425.

2. Vol. III, p. 392.  
3. Vol. III, p. 399.

The occurrence of  
4. Vol. IV, pp.

circle of their own drawing. The one half of the Christian world has often doomed the other half without mercy to eternal perdition.<sup>1</sup> But if ever devotion shall make you so conceited as to establish your own opinions as an infallible standard for the whole world and shall lead you to consign to perdition all who differ with you either in some doctrinal tenets or in the mode of expressing them, you may rest assured that to much pride you have joined much ignorance, both of the nature of devotion and of the gospel of Christ.<sup>2</sup> Religion connected with true wisdom will teach us to be neither rigid in trifles nor relaxed in essentials, without harshness in our manner or severity in our censures, when others depart from our mode of thinking on religious subjects.<sup>3</sup>

All extremes in religion are dangerous. By carrying austerity too far we are in hazard of only promoting hypocrisy. But though some in the last age might be prone to this extreme, yet at the present day there is not too much occasion for warning men against it.<sup>4</sup>

Religion neither abolishes the distinction of ranks, as the vain philosophy of some would teach us to do, nor interferes with a modest and decent indulgence of pleasure.<sup>5</sup> It does not prohibit all mirth or require us to sequestrate ourselves from every cheerful entertainment of social life.<sup>6</sup> Retreat from the world is not the perfection of religion as Roman Catholics hold,

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1. Vol. II, p. 240.  
p. 193.

2. Vol. I, p. 276.  
4. Vol. IV, p. 110; Vol. I, p. 252.

3. Vol. V,  
5. Vol. IV, p. 106.  
6. Vol. II, p. 344; Vol. I, pp. 249, 273.

but, with a few exceptions, is no other than the abuse of it.<sup>1</sup> Those who look with a severe and indignant eye upon all recreations are injurious to religion, for they exhibit it to others under a forbidding form by clothing it with a garb of so much unnecessary austerity, and they deprive the world of the benefit which their example might afford in drawing the line between the innocent and dangerous pleasures.<sup>2</sup>

Wherever religion is mentioned, some connect it with ideas of melancholy and dejection or of a mean and feeble spirit.<sup>3</sup> But devotion does not nourish a spirit of severity in judging the manners and characters of others.<sup>4</sup> True religion is far removed from that gloomy and illiberal superstition which clouds the brow, sharpens the temper, dejects the spirits, and teaches men to fit themselves for another world by neglecting the concerns of this.<sup>5</sup>

Wherever Christianity has prevailed, it has discouraged and in some degree abolished slavery, and it has introduced more equality between the sexes, rendering the conjugal union more happy. It has abated the ferociousness of war and mitigated the rigors of despotism.<sup>6</sup>

Blair has little to say about missions. One argument that he gives for the general propagation of the gospel is that just and rational principles of religion may fill up the room which dangerous fanaticism will otherwise usurp.<sup>7</sup> He mentions the

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1. Vol. I, p. 217.      2. Vol. I, pp. 273, 274.      3. Vol. III, p. 3.      4. Vol. I, p. 275.      5. Vol. I, pp. 291, 292.  
6. Vol. I, pp. 143, 144.      7. Vol. II, p. 424.

spreading of the gospel at home: With great propriety the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge has bestowed their chief attention on a remote region of our country where from a variety of causes, ignorance and superstition had gained ground more than in any other corner of the land; where the inhabitants by their local situation were more imperfectly supplied with the means of proper education and instruction and at the same time exposed to the seductions of such as sought to pervert them from the truth.<sup>1</sup>

He turns to politics. It was reserved for modern times and evil days, he says, to engender in one region of the earth a system of false philosophy which should revive the exploded principles of atheism and study to pour forth their poison among the nations, not only to the extinction of religion, but to the subversion of established government and of good order among mankind.<sup>2</sup> Some contend that they are not bound to have any more concern for the interests of Great Britain than for those of France or any other country. But let us disclaim all such refinements of false philosophy and resolve to love our native land and in every proper way show our attachment to it.<sup>3</sup> As Christian citizens we have ground for entertaining the warmest affections for our native country and for putting a just value on that constitution of government, civil and sacred, under which it is placed.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Vol. II, pp. 424, 425.  
3. Vol. V, pp. 117, 118.

2. Vol. V, p. 25.  
4. Vol. V, p. 116.

Our country is the seat of true religion. It is a land of liberty and laws, under a just and mild government. We are freed from the dominion of Popish superstition and darkness which so long overspread the earth, and here the light of the blessed reformation continues to shine in its greatest splendor. What establishment of religion more friendly to public happiness could be desired or framed? How zealous ought we to be for its preservation! Thereby we may prevent not only a return to Rome, but also the coming in of other evils--avowed infidelity, atheism, and gross immorality--under the guise of philosophy and with the pretence of unlimited toleration.<sup>1</sup>

In its present state the British government may be justly accounted to be removed an equal distance from either anarchy or despotism. All foreigners look to its constitution with wonder and envy as the happiest system that was ever devised for uniting dignity in the magistrate and liberty in the subject with protection and security to all.<sup>2</sup> There are no advantages claimed by a republic but what under the British constitution are enjoyed to the full. On the exertion of a laudable and honorable talent no restraint is laid. No odious distinctions are made between nobility and people, no severe exclusive privileges are possessed by the former to the prejudice of the latter, but merit in every rank has the freest scope.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Vol. V, pp. 122-124.

2. Vol. V, p. 126.

3. Vol. V, p. 128.

However the opinions of men may differ about this or that political measure adopted by the government, it may with confidence be said that we have much reason to respect those rulers who administer the empire, and under whose direction the nation, though engaged in a hazardous and expensive war,<sup>1</sup> has all along continued to hold a high rank among the nations of Europe and has attained to that flourishing state of commerce, opulence, and safety, in which we behold it at this day.<sup>2</sup> We are blessed now with a sovereign<sup>3</sup> at the head of the empire to whom faction itself cannot impute throughout his long reign any acts of tyranny, cruelty, or oppression, and whose personal virtues and domestic conduct hold forth to the nation such an high example of piety, decency, and good order.<sup>4</sup>

Of all the forms of government that have been established on the earth the republican is attended with the greatest disadvantages to those who live under it. It has ever been and never can be any other than a perpetual struggle between oligarchy and democracy, between rich and poor, between a few popular leaders who aspire to the chief influence and the unruly violence of a turbulent multitude.<sup>5</sup>

Blair makes a few observations regarding society in general. What a scene of confusion it would become, he states, if capital punishments, which are the last resource of government, were of no influence to deter offenders.<sup>6</sup> Remove also the dread of an

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1. In 1793, during the war with France.  
 3. George III. 4. Vol. V, p. 127.  
 129. 6. Vol. II, p. 204.

2. Vol. V, p. 138.  
 5. Vol. V, pp. 128,

invisible avenger and future punishment from the minds of men and you strengthen the hands of the wicked and endanger the safety of society.<sup>1</sup>

Society requires distinctions of property, diversity of conditions, subordination of ranks, and multiplicity of occupations in order to advance the general good.<sup>2</sup> As long as wealth is properly employed, persons in low situation naturally look up to their superiors with respect. They rest contented in their station. They are even disposed to bless the hand that furnishes them with employment on reasonable terms and occasionally dispenses reasonable relief.<sup>3</sup> It is to the luxury and riot of the abusers of the world that are due the discontents of the poor, their dissatisfaction with their rank, and their proneness to disturb the world.<sup>4</sup> Especially in times of scarcity and want, such as I now write,<sup>5</sup> the poor see some indulging in wastefulness and thoughtless profusion, while they and their families are not able to earn their bread.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Vol. III, pp. 351, 352.

2. Vol. I, p. 86.

3. Vol.

V, p. 265.

4. Vol. III, p. 312.

5. There is no indi-

cation of the occasion or date.

6. Vol. V, p. 265.

### C. Conclusion



## CHAPTER VIII

### An Evaluation

This concluding chapter is a brief critical summary of the preaching of the three men of this study, together with an evaluation of their sermons from a modern standpoint.

The sermons of Ralph Erskine are examples of the long, involved, somewhat tedious, theologically heavy sermons that have been regarded as typical of Scottish preaching in the early part of the eighteenth century. There was little regard for points of style. While his language and expressions were often impressive and vivid, his sentences were usually long and complicated, his grammar poor, his words sometimes vulgar and repellent. He was unable to express ideas clearly and briefly, but resorted to extended reasonings that added length rather than clarity.

His theology was Calvinism with an evangelical emphasis. He preached what he believed to be the Scriptural and historic faith of his church. In his interpretation of the Confession of Faith he differed from the majority of the church, as is evidenced by the Assembly's action in the Marrow case, but this difference was not so much an actual one as one of stress. In every instance where there was disagreement, he attempted

to show that his doctrine was not erroneous. It was well that he did so, for the logical conclusions, which one would inevitably draw from some of his sermons, presented doctrinal difficulties. His theology is not characterized by much, if any, original thinking on his part. He seemed more or less content to agree with the 'best' or the 'majority' of divines on all matters in question.

Erskine was dogmatic in his opinions, firm and unbending in his beliefs. He felt that he knew the truth, if few others did, and he was severe in his condemnation of those who differed with him. He seemed to be more interested in blasting his opponents to bits, however, than in winning them to his view. His greatest weakness was his inability to distinguish the important from the unimportant. Variation, he said, from the smallest truth was as serious as departure from the greatest. As a result, he quibbled over the minor as if it were the major. He suggested what he called 'fundamentals,' but in reality he considered his whole theology to be fundamental. Because of this, a narrow circle of his own choosing was drawn that separated the true believers, who agreed with him, from the great mass of unbelievers. Erskine's intolerance and narrowness were sometimes quite strong, and there is too often an air of self-righteousness. From the tone of some of his preaching, and were not the evidence to the contrary, it would be very believable that he was the one who told Whitefield that the Associate Presbytery

were the Lord's people.

Unlike many others in his day, Ralph Erskine was not content to preach the gospel without bringing in matters of controversy. His sermons are filled with opinions on all the questions of concern at the time. He was the popular champion of the rights of the people and the defender of the traditions of his church. He looked to the past as the Golden Age of religion, and he sought a return to the past as the solution for the troubles of his own day. He called his generation the worst that had ever appeared and bewailed the changes that were taking place in all walks of life. These were a going-off from the good old way. Unable to adjust himself to any progress, or unwilling to do so, he was content to be the self-appointed critic of all persons and events, making his criticisms to be also those of God. He spoke out whenever he felt it his place or duty to do so. He exhibited little of Christian charity towards those with whom he disagreed, and his severity is sometimes amazing for a Christian minister. Too often the issues of the day became unduly magnified in proportion to their relative importance. Erskine was such an active participant in the affairs of the day that he took too little time for impartial observing.

While there were serious faults in Erskine's preaching, he is to be admired for his advocacy of truth as he saw it. He is to be admired particularly for his preaching of the free grace

of God and the centrality of the cross of Christ in a day when there was a tendency to relegate these great doctrines to the background. In his sermons there was a ring of conviction. One could not be indifferent to what he said. A decision must be made. There were two sides to an issue, and one must choose on which side one stood. One cannot read the sermons of Ralph Erskine without a feeling of his sincerity and earnestness. He knew Jesus Christ and was trying in his own way and to the best of his ability to serve and honor Christ and to lead people to Him.

The sermons of John Erskine also appealed to those with evangelical sentiments and sympathies. He, too, preached the gospel of Jesus Christ with conviction, and yet, as distinct from Ralph, he sought to furnish certain positive suggestions regarding Christian conduct, as well as to lead people to Jesus. He was practical-minded and interested in the application of the gospel to daily life. But his sermons were by no means watered-down moralisms. He was awake to the fact that the majority of people who heard his preaching were already Christians by profession, but they had need of being built up in Christ.

His sermons did not possess the length or theological weight of Ralph's, and in this respect he moved with the fashion of the times. He did not give too much attention to matters of style. His primary concern was to convey his thoughts clearly and forcibly in language that would be understood, and in this he succeeded.

His theology was traditional Calvinism, with an evangelical emphasis, but without stress on minor points or insistence on complete theological conformity. He attempted to make his theology appealing in a day when many of its teachings were under attack. He preached what he believed and did not shy away from controversial or unpopular doctrines. His approach was essentially positive, and he did not spend his time in making frontal assaults on error. He was mostly interested in winning his opponents to his own way of thinking. His preaching was directed more to the head than to the heart, though both appeals were there.

John Erskine was conservative, but not in the same sense as Ralph Erskine, for he moved with the times. He approved of the best of the past, but he was not tied to it nor did he want to go back to it. He was also a defender of the traditions of his church, but his preaching differed from that of Ralph in that there was little concern with matters of controversy. In fact, in his ordinary sermons controversial subjects in the social and political fields were never treated. He did criticize events and conditions, but when he did so, he spoke in general terms and on general issues. He said nothing that would have been offensive to any in his congregation. His sermons exhibited no spirit of intolerance. In outlook and thought he occupied a middle position between the Secession and Moderatism.

Hugh Blair preached sermons that were suited to the cultured and fastidious tastes of his day. He appealed to those of

influence and position who preferred a comfortable, easy religion, without extremes, without controversy or wearisome arguments, without too much emotion, and without too much depth of thought. There was not the ring of conviction in his sermons nor the appeal for a decision, which was found in the other two. Christ did not occupy a central position, and many would have to seek elsewhere for an answer to the needs of their souls.

His theology was Calvinism, but doctrine played a purely secondary, sometimes almost peripheral, role. His preaching was to a Christian congregation, and therefore he felt the need to be the instilling of Christian character. Thus his message was the reasonableness of good moral character. Unfortunately he allowed himself to preach almost exclusively on this, and no attempt was made to obtain a balance in his preaching. As a result they are nearly all moralistic in nature. The morals he preached were generally particular virtues or evils. It was his failing to draw absolute lines between good and bad and to portray ideal characters rather than realistic ones. Because of this his sermons never feel as if they are directed at the one who reads or hears.

He strictly avoided discussions on social and political matters about which there might have been a difference of opinion. Occasionally he spoke out on subjects upon which all thinking people were agreed. His sermons advocated tolerance and respect for differences of belief, and in this he had advanced far be-

yond Ralph Erskine.

Of the sermons considered in this study, those of John Erskine, apart from their style and application to his day, would be the most acceptable in this twentieth century. Ralph's are too closely tied to the times, and Hugh Blair's lack the central core of the gospel message. Taken as a whole, however, the sermons of these three men have little value for today. They are relics of a bygone age in the history of the church and are interesting only as souvenirs of that period. They do not possess the quality of timelessness, and in a way this is both a strength and a weakness.

One reason why these men as preachers are not lastingly great is the fact that they were not pioneers who reached ahead of their day. They advocated no new social theories, no political advances, no changes in surrounding conditions, no new interpretations of Scripture, no new insights into spiritual truths. They did strike a popular note in their day, they had a message for people in their century, they were outstanding men of the times, they formed links in the great chain of the history of the church, they fulfilled their places in the purpose of God. To this extent they were successful preachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and this is sufficient, even though their fame and greatness has not been permanent.

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